

# PROFESSIONAL CONSULTATION WITH PUPILS THROUGH TEACHING ABOUT LEARNING:

Educational Psychologists working with pupils to explore their understanding of themselves as learners as they move from primary to secondary school.

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*'Success comes in cans: I can, I can, I can  
It's better to wear out than rust out  
Talk with the kids, you'll be surprised how  
Problems disappear and dreams develop'*

(Ingram and Worrall, 1993 p.93)

*"Pupils will decide what they want to learn and learn it.  
Each pupil will work on their own projects, producing  
them in any way they like. They will then have something  
to be proud of. They will receive help from people  
working at the school and fellow pupils, as everyone will  
be seen as having valid knowledge and opinions."  
Miriam, 15.*

(Burke and Grosvenor, 2003 p.76)

*"But if you tried to be someone else that you  
weren't who you are that's just so confusing to find  
out who you are because you say to yourself oh I'm  
sensible I think I've got to be something under the  
category of sensible but actually how you are to  
your friends and your mum and dad and everything  
that's who you are really and I think that they  
should be themselves"*

*Pupil in year 7*

# **DECLARATION**

**I DECLARE THAT THIS IS MY OWN ORIGINAL  
WORK**

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# **ABSTRACT**

Accessing and presenting the views of children and young people is considered one of the key roles of educational psychologists, however professional experience and a wide range of research has suggested the general absence of the pupil voice within education (Fielding, 2001). Critical examination of the way in which pupils and learning are constructed within education highlighted how current preferred constructions place pupils in a passive role and how this inhibits active pupil participation and therefore genuine professional consultation.

This research set out to examine whether the use of teaching might be an effective way for educational psychologists to genuinely consult with pupils about their understanding of their own learning and their experience of school.

Building on previous work which explored a number of different models of pupil participation, I selected teaching as a different way of consulting with pupils as teaching is a way of both drawing on and embedding professional consultation within everyday classroom practice. The process, based on an action research method, was to consult with pupils about their understanding of learning in their last year at primary school and at the time of the transition between primary and secondary school.

I worked with three year 6 classes in three primary schools and followed them through to their secondary school during their first term in year 7. As a way of undertaking a dialogue about learning in school, I offered the pupils psychological information about a range of learning strategies, which they could consider and develop for themselves over a series of four sessions within the spring and summer term at primary school. I revisited the pupils' understandings of these learning strategies, their own learning and their experience of moving

from primary to secondary school through three focus group sessions with the pupils in their first term at secondary school.

The analysis of the research material arising from the work with pupils focused on the pupils' own words or records as a way of making their voice more audible. This analysis, using grounded theory, led to a number of emerging theories about pupils' understanding of their learning within school and their experience of transition between primary and secondary school. These theories suggested that the pupils were unused to any active consideration of learning and that their overriding view of school was one of resignation to 'schoolwork'. The most important feature of school for the pupils was that of relationships and networks of support.

I examined whether teaching was a useful process for professional consultation with pupils in relation to previously considered models of pupil participation. In so doing I suggested there is a mismatch between models of pupil participation and the reality of pupils' everyday experience of learning in school. I suggested, from the research, that pupils were afforded little opportunity to actively participate within school. I drew on activity theory (Engestrom, 1999) as a useful framework for analysing these mismatches. This framework suggested that the predominant construction was of pupils as passive recipients of learning and that the focus on learning outcomes actively inhibited the development of pupil participation. As educational psychologists, we were caught in these constructions. I went on to suggest that much of the psychological theory and models of practice, both professionally and research based, upon which educational psychologists draw or are expected to draw, could be seen as similarly limiting pupil participation.

In conclusion I considered the implications of this research for the professional practice of educational psychologists in developing effective ways of genuinely consulting with children and young people. I suggested that educational psychologists needed to bring their own

constructions of pupils and learning to the forefront of their practice. I proposed a model for professional consultation with pupils. This model of pupil participation and pupil empowerment is based on 'activity theory' and suggests that genuine professional consultation with pupils requires an examination of how pupils and learning are constructed within the educational setting alongside consideration of appropriate tools and techniques of consultation. These tools and techniques might usefully include teaching, providing this was coupled with a careful consideration of the subsystems influencing pupil participation.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out to provide an outline of the background to this research and to make explicit the process by which the research focus was identified. In so doing, I have tried to show how the research has arisen from my professional practice as an educational psychologist and has, in turn, informed and changed my practice. In this sense, the research has been located within everyday work, rather than as a separate activity running alongside. The research has made my professional practice the object of attention and has then evolved as part of my work.

### Context

One of the key roles of the educational psychologist is to present a holistic view of the child or young person (Division of Educational and Child Psychology, 2002a), which includes the presentation of the child or young person's own views and perspectives, so that they are able to contribute to the process of decision making about their future interests. Many of the current ways and approaches towards obtaining children's views have been challenged as doing things *to* and *for* children, rather than together *with* children (for example, Burden, 1996; Roller, 1998). The argument is that the way in which children's views are gained is often tokenistic or even disabling, rather than empowering.

A question that then arises is how can the views and perspectives of children and young people be obtained and represented so that they might then be able to actively contribute to the plans for developing their own learning and learning environment; in Burden's (1996) words ' (in) a form of empowerment rather than enslavement' (p. 106). The context of this present research is then embedded in an ongoing exploration of the relationship between the role of educational psychologists and pupil empowerment and pupil participation.

In reflecting on this relationship, I began a professional journey to explore how I could genuinely consult with children and young people about their experiences and thereby enable them to present their views in a way that would make it more likely that these views would be heard and acted upon. The route was not taken alone, but with a range of others, principally colleagues and children and young people themselves.

At the start of the journey, I asked a simple question. When I talked with children and young people, how effective was I in accessing and reporting their views? Initially the question seemed to invite a consideration of whether I, or other colleagues, had the appropriate skills or access to the right tools and techniques to do that job competently. If not, then the next step would be to look for further training or other tools and techniques and test these out.

However on reflection the question became much more complex, as I began to explore, along with other colleagues, the context in which professional discussions with children arose and the implications this context had on our attempts at consultation with children and young people.

The route was unclear: however a number of features emerged as I undertook a range of activities around enhancing pupil empowerment. One feature represented a professional path, along which encounters with pupils' experience of school life became central, and highlighted questions about the way in which educational psychologists undertake their work with pupils. A second feature concerned the attempts of educational psychologists to genuinely consult with pupils in ways that enabled them to take a more active and informed role in planning their own learning. A third was research in education which looked to surface pupils' own views of their educational experience and whose outcomes emphasised that pupils are often viewed as recipients rather than partners in the learning process. In effect, the journey began to reveal the way in which we, as educational psychologists, have constructed our work with children and young people and how we are part of other constructions or discourses which inform ours or others understanding of direct work with children and young people.

The picture, which emerged from professional practice and from educational research, was the absence of the *agency* of the pupil in schools. Davies (1999a) described agency as

‘a sense of being able to control events rather than events or people always determining what you do or who you are’ (p. 20)

In this context, where pupils have few, if any, legitimate ways of contributing to or influencing the way in which their learning and learning environment is organised, how do educational psychologists consult effectively with them? In this context of silence, how do I enable the pupil voice to become more audible?

As a next step, I identified and began to explore a number of models of pupil participation, which might provide a framework for evaluating and improving my professional practice in consulting with children and young people. As part of this exploration, one of the most influential models was that of Rudduck and Flutter (2000), who argued that

‘We could do more to help pupils develop a language for talking about learning and about themselves as learners so that they feel that it is legitimate for them actively to contribute to discussions about schoolwork with teachers and with each other’ (p.76)

It was at this point that the journey took on a new direction.

## **A New Path**

Emerging from the activities around enhancing pupil empowerment and exploring models of pupil participation was an increasing interest in developing a professional practice that tried out ways of working with pupils to give them more direct access to psychology. I then considered how, as an educational psychologist, I could set up a process to work with pupils to develop their language for talking about learning, themselves as learners and their experience of learning in school through sharing psychological knowledge. This process would draw on and extend the work undertaken previously to develop ways of genuinely

consulting with pupils about their school experiences; working with pupils that attempted to develop active participation rather than using pupils as a 'source of data'.

My previous work (for example Cossavella and Hobbs, 2001; Cossavella, Groves, Hobbs, Jones, Lingard, Twisleton and Vickers, 2001) had covered a number of distinct but related activities, with a central focus of developing pupils' own resources to support their learning. Much of the work was related to individual pupils who were deemed to have special educational needs. Discussing with pupils the purpose and possible outcomes of any professional involvement with me was one way in which pupils could contribute to future planning about ways in which they could support their own learning and ways in which others might support their learning. Other activities related to the wider pupil body and worked on developing psychological knowledge and skills that could be applied to support themselves or others in school. A particular area was supporting pupils in their transition between schools, with an emphasis on the importance of the pupils' own contribution and direction being central to the planning. Links were then beginning to emerge between enabling individual pupils to better support their own learning, enabling groups of pupils to support their own and each other's learning and particular stress points, for example change of school, when working alongside pupils to enhance their own resources, individually and as a group, might prove an effective area of practice for educational psychologists.

## **Developing the Research**

In considering the aims of the developing research, which were to enable pupils to better support their own learning through providing direct access to psychology and to develop ways of genuinely consulting with pupils about their experience of school, I identified a number of criteria from my previous work which I considered essential in furthering my professional practice toward pupil empowerment. These were: -

- to work directly with pupils;

- to seek the views of pupils directly;
- to work in a setting familiar to the pupils;
- to focus on an issue or issues that impacted on the whole pupil group;
- to work in a context that might enable the ideas arising from the research to be pursued;
- to work in an area in which I had relevant experience and expertise;
- to provide pupils with information that might prove useful to them.

I identified these points as a way of trying to maximise an interactive process, in which the pupils might feel most confident and comfortable to contribute and in which I had immediate access to their contributions and responses. These feedback loops could then influence and develop the process of research. I also wanted exposure to the power of the setting and the well established networks of relationships in which the pupils' experience and understanding had developed. Without this knowledge, I would be unaware of the conditions for learning within the school. Finally if I was to 'use' school time, it was important that the pupils might see the content as of benefit to them either immediately or in the longer term and that they would feel confident that the content was presented from a sound knowledge base.

I then began to consider ways in which this dialogue about learning could begin. I wanted to adopt an approach of critical enquiry (Aoki, 1979), where as a researcher I became involved with the subjects, entered into their world and engaged in mutually reflective activity. Work as an educational psychologist is more usually at a 'distance' from immediate school and classroom experience. I generally act as a consultant to practitioners who work more directly with pupils or, when professionally meeting with pupils, this is around a problem or concern.

Although I had developed practices to encourage consultation with pupils about their understanding of my role and their own learning, this seemed removed from the wider pupil group because of the association with 'difficulties'. I identified direct teaching as a possible way of working with the wider range of pupils. By using a teaching approach, I could address the points identified above and construct a process that enabled discussion and commentary about that process. In other words, teaching could provide me with the opportunity to start a



dialogue with pupils about psychology and learning in school, which could both begin to give pupils direct access to psychology and inform my professional practice.

## **Developing Professional Practice by Consulting with Pupils through Teaching**

The focus of the research then became an investigation of a different way of consulting with pupils through teaching about psychology. A teaching approach was identified for a number of reasons. Rather than seeking to isolate or separate pupils from their everyday classroom experience of working alongside familiar peers and staff, this approach would maintain as much continuity as possible with their ongoing life in school. Furthermore this methodology allowed for a research process that enabled investigation of everyday professional practice with minimum intrusion into the lives of pupils and teachers. Rowland (2000) argued that

‘teaching and research are two sides of the same coin’ (.. and ) ‘the ability to inquire, to engage others in one’s enquiries and to learn from them are the characteristics of the good teacher, the good researcher and the good student... teaching, learning and research are not different activities...’ (p. 28)

This was particularly relevant in relation to the focus of the research on consulting with pupils about their knowledge and understanding of learning.

‘The cycle of question and instruction is the same for all- teacher, pupil, researchers- and in teaching pupils have to make a task their own in some way, to become their own teachers, and discover their own interest and talent in relation to what is presented, what they observe, what is reviewed and monitored and so on..... and the pupil can be instructing the research psychologist.... Here it is the research psychologist who is asking ‘what is the pupil on about?’ (Mageean, 2002, p. 25)

As such this research attempted to adopt a method and design that enabled all participants (teachers, pupils and researchers) to become ‘co-researchers’. The research method also

needed to recognise that if the research process was going to have a chance of longer-term impact then changes to the usual organisation of classroom life must be at a minimum. Fullan (2002) stated 'learning in context is the learning with the greatest payoff because it is more specific and because it is social'. This reflected a socio-cultural psychological perspective, which stressed the role of collaborative interaction in the construction and reconstruction of knowledge.

## **The Research Focus**

The next step was to identify a focus for the research, which drew on my own knowledge and experience and could provide information, which might prove useful to the pupils themselves. I had undertaken a range of work to support the transition from primary to secondary school. Alongside this, schools and pupils often express particular concerns about this change, which is now coupled with end of primary school standard assessment tests (SATs). These concerns have been highlighted within research literature.

### **Transition**

One of the major points of transition for young people, one that is usually associated with the shift from childhood to adolescence, is the transfer from primary to secondary school.

'The transition from childhood to adulthood in contemporary English society is characterized by a series of small transition points rather than a single initiation into adulthood. Nevertheless, for children themselves these points of partial transition, such as moves through the school system... can take on quite intense meaning'.

(James and Prout, 1998, p. 246).

The primary to secondary school transfer has been a source of concern for professionals for over 30 years (Galton, Morrison and Pell, 2000), and for pupils whenever transfer arises, and continues to attract frequent media coverage (for example: Dillner, 2000; Figes, 2002; Gold, 2000; Moorhead, 20001; Williams, 2003). The focus of concern is located primarily in two

areas, that of the anxiety for pupils arising from the prospect of change and 'dip' in performance following transfer. Considering the amount of change that pupils have to face with relatively little past experience to draw upon, it is in many ways surprising that the majority of pupils do manage the transfer successfully. Many adults would find this level of change hard to contemplate; change of location, change of work practices, loss of significant adults, loss of significant peers, lack of prior experience of likely demands, co-operation and collaboration with up to at least 25 other adults and possibly hundreds of other peers and so on.

Galton, Morrison and Pell (2000), in reviewing research evidence in this area, saw transfer as creating 'a hiatus rather than a decline in pupils' progress'. This hiatus has been attributed to a variety of causes; lack of liaison between feeder and receiving schools, lack of transfer of appropriate information or failure to read and utilize transfer information, a pupil focus on social rather than academic goals, schools' attention to alleviating pupil stress has led to less attention to academic goals, and onset of adolescence (Fouracre, 1993; Galton, Gray and Rudduck, 1999; Hargreaves and Galton, 2002; Rudduck, Chaplain and Wallace, 1996), however a key factor throughout research, from as early as the Hadow Report (1926), was evidence of 'the discontinuities in learning experienced by the pupils' (Rudduck, Chaplain and Wallace, 1996). Galton, Morrison and Pell (2000) summarized this as

'discontinuities inherent in the process of transfer, particularly the use of different methods and demands made upon pupils by the varied approaches to learning that such methods require'. (p.9)

In fact pupils might experience a high level of repetition, lack of challenge, low expectation and an apparent failure of secondary schools to manage the tension between inducting pupils into the rituals of the secondary school and to provide for individual personal development (Galton, Gray and Rudduck, 1999).

Though many pupils looked forward to transfer, many also expressed significant concerns (Cossavella, 2003; Delamont, 1991; Lucey and Reay, 2000; Measor and Woods, 1984). These concerns ranged over a number of areas, but there was a cluster around the organisational and work demands of the secondary school and anxieties over relationships with peers (cf Suffolk County Council, 2002). The tendency in secondary schools to direct student learning and behaviour ran against the level of sophisticated thinking from the students themselves. Students could feel disappointed by the lack of challenge to their learning and more particularly by the lack of 'say' within the school. Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck (2000) noted that

'they (students) respond well to opportunities to exercise choice and to feel some sense of control over their learning'. (p. 4)

and recommended that to sustain commitment and raise achievement secondary schools should

'create time for dialogue about learning so that students begin to understand the longer term implications of what they are doing and also begin to develop a language for thinking about learning and about themselves as learners'. (p. 4).

This echoed Galton, Gray and Rudduck's (1999) recommendation that

'schools need to consider the possibility of providing flexible teaching which takes account of differences in pupils' preferred learning styles'. (p. 4)

and the need for schools to ensure

'the development of continuity in strategies for developing students' responsibility for their own learning, self-respect and independence between primary and secondary schools seems crucial to the success of students'. (Blair and Bourne, 1998, p.160)

Providing pupils with access to information about ways of learning, which they could use to support the demands of school change, could alleviate some concerns. The move from primary to secondary school then seemed a useful focal point, when pupils are being asked to manage significant change alongside coping with an important time of assessment (Key Stage

2 SATs). I saw this as a way of working directly with pupils to share with them information from psychology which they could use, as they chose, to support a time of change. As part of the same process I could listen and learn from their experience of learning in school and school change.

## **The Research**

I then set out to work with classes of year 6 pupils to develop their knowledge of themselves as learners and support them in considering how they might apply this knowledge to future learning at the time of their transfer from primary to secondary school. More particularly the process of the research was to explicitly offer the pupils information about ways of learning, and ask them to consider its usefulness for them. In this way pupils were asked to openly comment on both the content and process of the work, so that this way of working could be evaluated in the light of pupil perspectives.

### **The research questions**

The overarching research inquiry was an exploration of how I, as an educational psychologist, could genuinely consult with children and young people about their experiences of learning and school and thereby enable them to present their views in a way that would make it more likely that they would be heard and acted upon.

I considered processes that might enable pupils to develop their language for talking about learning, themselves as learners and their experience of learning in school. As this search progressed, a particular interest in developing a professional practice that gave pupils more direct access to psychology emerged. I then considered ways in which attempts at genuine consultation and giving pupils direct access to psychology could be linked. In this way the main research question

- is teaching a way of professionally consulting with pupils?

was identified, as teaching was a way of both drawing on and embedding professional consultation within everyday practice.

In order to investigate this research question, I structured the focus of the research around an area of my own knowledge and experience, with the aim of providing direct support to pupils at a time of significant change. The following subsidiary research questions were then identified: -

- what understandings of learning would pupils have as they move from primary school (year 6) to secondary school (year 7)?
- how might these understandings develop when introducing year 6 and then year 7 classes to psychology about different ways of learning?
- how might pupils use their knowledge of different ways of learning and of themselves as learners to support their transition from primary to secondary school?

## **Outline of the Study**

Two educational psychologists (myself and a colleague) worked with three year 6 classes in 3 primary schools and followed these pupils through into year 7 in their secondary school. In the primary schools, we undertook a series of 3 sessions with each class in the spring term introducing a range of learning strategies and consulted with the pupils about their views on these learning strategies. We returned for a further session towards the end of the summer term and revisited the previous learning strategies, discussed transition to secondary school and consulted the pupils about their current views on their learning within school and their thoughts and feelings about transition into secondary school. We returned in November of the autumn term (in the pupils first term in Secondary school) to work with three volunteer focus groups, one from each of the pupils' previous primary schools, and once again we revisited their learning strategies and consulted with them about their experience of transition.

Documentation in the form of pupils' work, written and graphic, pupil evaluations, session notes, and recordings and discussions with school staff was collected from all the sessions and provided the data for analysis of the study.

## **The Structure of Following Chapters**

In Chapter 2, the literature review, I set out to critically examine the way in which children and young people are currently constructed and how this influences the ways in which professionals work with them. In particular I try to highlight how current preferred constructions place children and young people into a passive role in general, but more particularly, demonstrate how strongly this passivity infects education and in particular the practice of educational psychologists and how this inhibits pupil empowerment and participation. Finally, I introduce the research area of this study.

Chapter 3, the methodology, provides an examination of the rationale for the qualitative methodology chosen for the research study and outlines the choice of an action research method to examine professional practice. I describe the work undertaken during the research, including a reflective account of the action research 'in action' to highlight the continual reviews demanded by undertaking research in the real world. Finally I consider the ethical issues raised by the research and the validity of the study.

Chapter 4, the discursive analysis of the research material, considers the wide range of research material collected during the research process and sets out the rationale for the choice of the method of analysis, grounded theory. The focus is on the pupils' own words or records as a way of making *their* voice more audible. This analysis leads to a number of emerging theories about the pupils' understanding of learning and their experience of transition. A reflective account of the primary school sessions, which includes evaluative

feedback from the pupils and staff alongside professional review, follows the initial analysis of documentation from these sessions.

Chapter 5, the discussion, focuses on the main research question: 'is teaching a way of professionally consulting with pupils?' and examines this in relation to previously considered models of pupil participation. In so doing, I suggest a mismatch between models of pupil participation and the reality of pupils' everyday experience of learning. I draw on 'activity theory' (Engestrom, 1999) as a useful framework for analysing these mismatches and propose a model for pupil participation and pupil empowerment based on 'activity theory'.

In conclusion I consider the implications of this research for the professional practice of educational psychologists in developing genuine ways of consulting with pupils.



# **CHAPTER 2**

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Aims of the Literature Review**

Within the professional practice of educational psychologists, there has been a history of seeing themselves as advocates for the child or young person (Burden, 1996; Roller 1998). Much work has been undertaken to develop effective practical approaches to accessing and presenting children's and young people's views. These approaches have been based on a number of core values: -

- That there is a moral imperative to provide ways in which children and young people can actively contribute to any planning about themselves;
- That there are legal requirements to consult with children and young people. These requirements are less forceful within education than in legal and social services but nevertheless should underpin practice;
- That the child or young person has information about themselves that is valuable and no one else is able to present.

However the process of seeking children's and young people's views has proved problematic (Hobbs, Todd and Taylor, 2000). It has been possible to establish a wider range of technical approaches than used previously, many of which are informed by careful discussion with the adults who work more directly with the children and young people, including parents and carers; and in some cases the children or young people themselves; however the impact of this contribution is often negligible or at worst seen as ineffective by the children and young people themselves (Armstrong, 1995).

Despite positive movements, it was evident from a number of sources (for example Fielding, 2001; Prout, 2002) that the general discourses which surround the way children and young people are viewed within education and more widely in society, inhibit attempts to develop

genuine consultation with children and young people, and in particular consultation with pupils. This literature review attempts to explore these general discourses and to introduce a consideration of one way in which educational psychologists might challenge them.

In this literature review I then set out to:

- briefly present the historical and current background about pupils' own experience of school;
- examine the constructions or discourses that inform our current understanding of children and young people and how this affects their ability to express their views about their education;
- examine the discourses around the current location of pupils within schools and how this might impact on the nature and process of consultation with pupils;
- examine the key constructions or discourses that inform the current practice of educational psychologists and how these influence the ways in which the views and perspectives of children and young people are accessed;
- present the rationale for a research process based in everyday professional practice that attempts to explore a different way for educational psychologists to consult with children and young people.

## **The Background: the Pupils' Experience**

In 1969, Edward Blishen published his now seminal work 'The school I'd like' containing the views of secondary school pupils about their experiences of and dreams for school. In the sleeve note, he concluded,

'In all the millions of words that are written annually about education, one viewpoint is invariably absent – that of the child, the client of the school. It is difficult to think of another sphere of social activity in which the opinions of the customer are so persistently overlooked.' (Blishen, 1969, sleeve note).

'The School that I'd like' was one way to redress this imbalance. Judith's view was not untypical,

"This is a school! A place where people learn to live together and love one another, where people learn to reason, learn to understand and above all learn to think for themselves. School was not invented for the little people to become the same as the big people, but for pupils to learn how to live and how to let live". (Judith 13, quoted in Blishen, 1969, p. 30)

The 1960s and 1970s had welcomed a radical debate about education, perhaps most famously led by John Holt's (1965) 'How Children Fail' in America and John Vaizey's (1962) 'Education for Tomorrow' in Britain. Holt's (1965) critique of schooling sadly seems as relevant today as in 1965 and he summarized his argument with

' We cannot have real learning in school if we think it is our duty and right to tell children what they must learn....Choosing what he wants to learn and what he does not is something he must do for himself '. (p. 75).

Overall, at that time, the debate was about education and the nature of schooling, including the consideration of a wide range of educational alternatives (see Head, 1974). In the 1960s, children began to be seen as one oppressed group amongst others; a group which also needed a voice. The discourse of the 70s was one of empowering students (Franklin and Franklin, 1996), offering a number of radical proposals. Berger (1974) argued that

'There would perhaps be other ways of going on. One democratic answer to the question of authority in schools could be that pupils should have at least an equal say in all aspects of school life including what is taught and whether or not there should be a system of rewards and punishments'. (p. 83)

However the year of the child in 1979 refocused attention onto the protection and welfare of children and young people and not until 1989 UN Convention of Rights of Child did participation and protection come back together. The right of young people to make their views known and to be heard was again seen as a basis for protection. However, by this time,

schools were fully engaged with the then government's increasing challenge to meet new standards, introduce new tests, respond to school inspections and the publication of school league tables. Much of this agenda of accountability continued into the new Labour Government, leaving an education system focussed on performance and delivery rather than the richness and complexity of the learning experience. There were

'two contradictory tendencies in education to-day: one has to do with shaping malleable young people to serve the needs of technology in a post-industrial society; the other has to do with educating young people to grow and become different, to find their individual voices, and to participate in a community in the making.' (Greene, 1997, p. 64).

Some 35 years after Blishen's first publication, a further 15,000 young people offered contributions to a second book entitled 'The School I'd like' and in her review, Dea Birkett (2003) proposed that,

'this should be the main lesson adults learn from the 'School I'd Like'. It must be to listen and to respect what we hear. Children are so obviously more than ready to take up the challenge of redesigning their education. Are we ready to meet the challenge of listening to them?' (p. 9)

However, sadly, evidence suggests that children and young people continue to be silenced within education. Rudduck and Flutter (2000) summarized the current situation as

'This traditional exclusion of young people from the consultative process, this bracketing out of their voice, is founded upon an outdated view of childhood which fails to acknowledge children's capacity to reflect on issues affecting their lives.' (p. 86)

The following sections consider a number of discourses that inform our understanding of children and which may lead to this 'bracketing out of their voice'.

# **The constructions that Inform Our Current Understanding of Children and Young People**

## **An outdated view of childhood: The construction of the child as ‘not yet adult’**

A number of discourses have permeated views of childhood, many of which have served to devalue the views of children and young people and made it difficult for people to take seriously the idea of encouraging young people to contribute to debates about issues that affect them, both in and out of school. These commonly held discourses have become accepted or ‘taken for granted’ and children are now constructed as subjects by these discourses and disciplines, which can become statements of ‘truth’ (Foucault, 1970): this is how children *are* rather than this is how we *see* children. In examining these discourses and disciplines, this social construction (Freeman, 1983) becomes more transparent and it is possible to begin to consider how these current constructions impact on children’s participation in general and within education in particular.

Perhaps one of the most pervasive discourses is that of children ‘not being adult’. The biological immaturity of childhood has become the way in which childhood as a whole is characterized. Adulthood has become the norm (Grace, 1995) and therefore children are seen as serving an apprenticeship (Archard, 1993). As such children are described as irrational, incompetent, irresponsible or as innocent, wayward, playful (Lansdown, 1994). In either case children are in need of adult protection to provide them with discipline and guidance or care and nurturing. Wyness (2000) argued that this view of care, both nurturing and controlling, permeated our construction of childhood and this placed children into the role of passive acceptors of ‘adults know best’.

‘ We have extended childhood far beyond its limits than in many developing countries and in earlier periods in history. In so doing we have infantilized children and in many cases we grossly underestimate their capacity for informed decision making’. (Lansdown, 1994, p. 20).

This positioning of children has been conceptualised as 'generational order' (Alanen and Mayall, 2001), which presented the systematic pattern of social relationships between adults and children as similar to that of other key dimensions of social differentiation such as gender and class.

Some influential notions of child development can be seen to support this view, by presenting childhood as a steady progression towards adulthood. Children pass through a naturally ordered sequence of physiological, cognitive and developmental stages (Piaget, 1950), which bounds and limits their understanding and experience. Each identified stage has established expectations about the appropriateness of certain behaviours or activities for particular ages of children.

Within this construction of 'not yet adult', the concept of age has become central to our understanding of childhood- asking about age, being with your age group in school, age of entry to and exit from particular schools, entry to adulthood; all are key educational issues (James and Prout, 1997). As such, age sets a series of boundaries that provide exit and entry points towards adulthood and underscores the view that the purpose of childhood is to make good adults.

These ideas have then become widely accepted into everyday educational practice and have informed a range of understandings related to childhood competence or more often limited competence. 'Education policy clearly defines children as ontologically absent in social and political terms' (Wyness, 2000, p. 104). School reflects, if not amplifies, the child's lack of social status. The purpose of schoolwork is work for the future not for itself. As education is about adulthood, this allows adults to organise its structure, content and delivery 'for' children. 'Schools remain the world of teachers in which children are temporary guests'. (Cullingford, 1991, p. 171)

By presenting these social constructions, children have acquired a series of needs:

- a need for care and nurture as they are biologically immature;

- a need for discipline and guidance as they have not reached rational or moral understanding;
- a need for education into agreed cultural knowledge, values and behaviour;
- a need for a set of competencies to provide for successful contribution in adult life.

This in essence has become an adult driven agenda, which sets out to ensure a high level of control over children and young people.

Educational reforms have served to further reduce any influence pupils may have had by introducing a more prescriptive curriculum, establishing increased school accountability, limiting opportunity for social and emotional development, extending parental influence and moving school further into home life by placing greater emphasis on homework.

My argument then is that before adults can take pupil participation seriously and it can be an effective experience for children, it is essential to examine our current constructions of childhood. Rather than generally viewing children as protoadults, future beings, it is to bring children into the present and enable them to present their own view of themselves.

Much work has been undertaken to present alternative constructions to childhood (for example Prout's review, 2002), which could begin to reframe views of pupil's participation.

In particular a construction where children are increasingly perceived as competent social actors with valuable insights to offer about their experiences and interactions with the social world they inhabit. Children are viewed as

‘a social actor, agents of change who can adapt to, challenge and inform the individuals, cultures and institutions which they encounter during childhood’.

(Watson, 2001, p. 5)

Research derived from this perspective has highlighted both the diversity and commonality of children's experience (see Shakespeare, Barnes, Cunningham-Burley, Davies, Priestly and Watson, 2000). Children live in many different social worlds, some of which are shared with adults, some of which are constructed for and by the children themselves. They impact on the

social worlds they inhabit and in turn are impacted upon by these worlds. As such their meanings and understandings are unique and insightful to themselves and differ from those of adults. They then have particular knowledge and perspectives which are valuable in their own right and which they may be willing, if asked, to share with adults (Harker, 2002; James and Prout, 1997). In particular, they have their own perceptions and knowledge about education and schools. Through providing ways for children and young people to communicate their views, these views are beginning to inform policy and practice (Alderson, 1999).

A question is then how do professionals, in particular educational psychologists, currently construct childhood and is this construction one that enables access to children and young people's perspectives such that these are valued equally to those of adults, or not? This question will be addressed in a later section 'Constructing professional practice to enable pupil participation'. The following section considers the relationship between constructions of childhood and views of children's rights and how this influences the nature of children's participation in within society.

## **Participation or protection? The construction of children's rights**

The view of children and young people as active social partners would seem to be supported by moves to promote children's rights. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was passed and ratified in the United Kingdom in 1991. The United Kingdom Government had already passed The Children Act (1989), which made radical changes in the law relating to the care and upbringing of children and required local authorities to ascertain the wishes and feelings of children looked after and to encourage their participation in assessment, planning and review procedures. Freeman (1996) argued for the significance of the United Nations Convention because it recognised the child as full human being with the ability to participate freely in society. He continued that this is 'the first convention to state that children have a right to "have a say" in processes affecting their lives' (p. 36). The



Convention provided a powerful stimulus to the discussion of children's rights in the United Kingdom (UK) and children's participation has achieved a high profile (Shier, 2001). Article 12 states

'State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with age and maturity of the child'

and this is summarized as

'The child's right to express an opinion, and to have that opinion taken into account, in any matter or procedure affecting the child'.

The Labour Government under Prime Minister Tony Blair could be seen to have been active in raising the profile of children's issues within Britain. It has established a cabinet committee for children and young people, launched the Children and Young People's Unit (2000), introduced approaches to encouraging the involvement of young people in government and most recently appointed a Minister of State for Children (2003), who would 'provide integrated leadership and responsibility for children's services and family policy within the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The DfES itself published its 'Listening to Learn' action plan to involve children and young people in 2002.

However there is some scepticism about the real impact of the implementation of all these initiatives. The right to express an opinion is still limited by emphasis on the capability of the child. The Education Act 2002, whilst requiring greater participation of children and young people in decision making within schools, also states that schools 'must provide for the pupil's views to be considered *in the light of his age and understanding*' (*my italics*)( s.176)

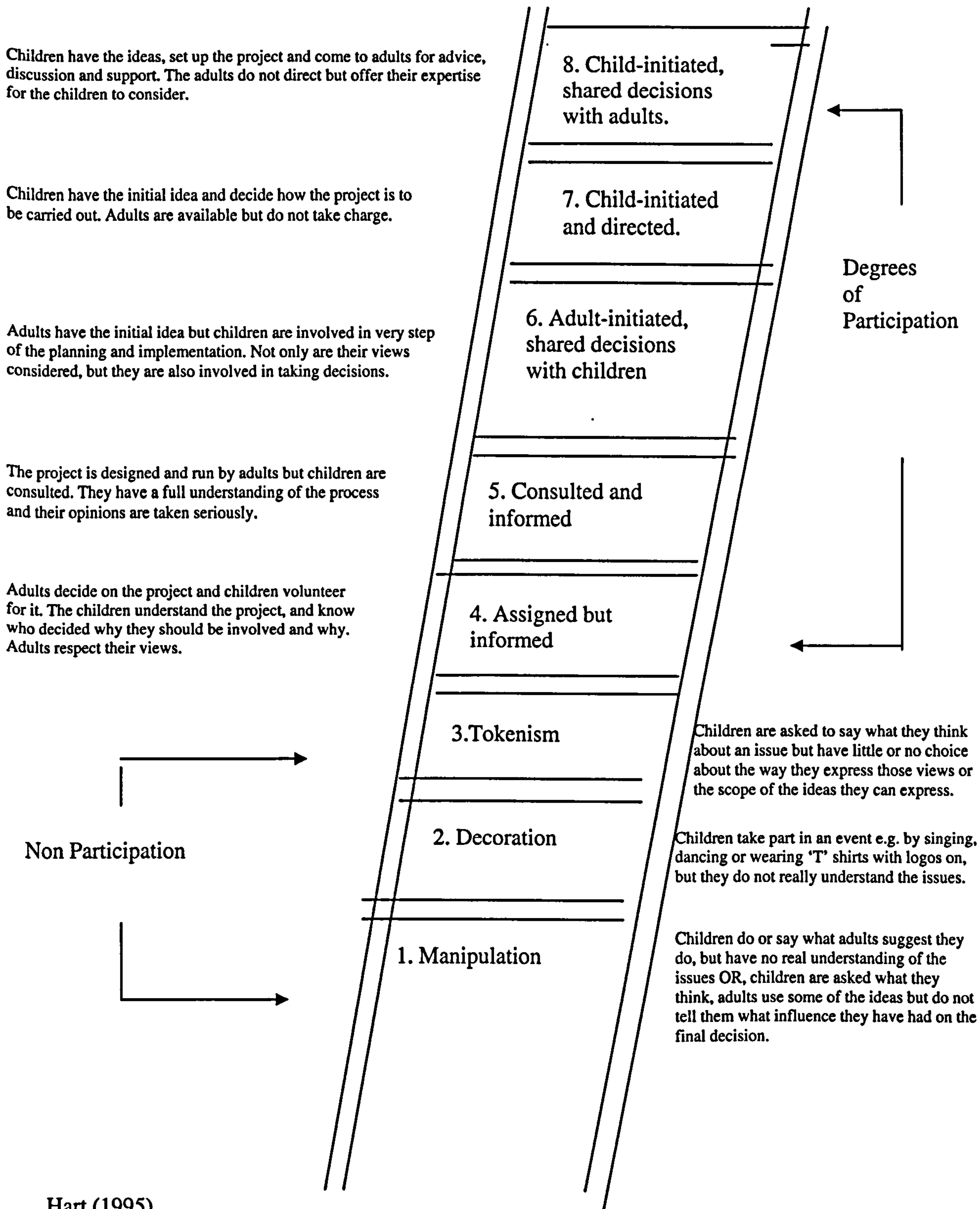
This requirement is preceded by s. 175 stating that schools have a duty to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This limitation refocused the emphasis on the welfare view of children's rights: the duty to protect. This is in contrast to a view of empowerment, which is about promoting individual autonomy and the potential for self-determination thus enabling each child to be seen as an individual who needs to develop skills

and experience in making decisions for themselves. Furthermore, Daniels and Jenkins (2000) argued that the principle of participation set out in the Children Act 1989 stopped at the school gates because of the doctrine of 'in loco parentis'. The duty of care and control continues to override an interest in promoting the pupil contribution. There is little effective acknowledgement of the civil and political rights of children in the process of education. Children have few formal rights to any control over or participation in matters concerning their education.

## **Models of participation**

The two sides of the debate about children's rights have been central to any consideration of furthering children's participation: on the one hand, adults have seen themselves as responsible for and protective of children: on the other hand, the adult's role has been to maximise children's participation and thereby increase independence. These considerations have given rise to a range of models to represent children's level of participation, perhaps the most influential of which has been Hart (1995). This model (See Figure 2.1 below) has been widely cited by organisations throughout the United Kingdom as being helpful to our understanding and promotion of children's participation. The influence of Hart's model was confirmed by research conducted by Save the Children in 1995 (Barn and Franklin, 1996). Surveyed organisations identified two models as the most helpful on children's participation, the model of Hart's 'Ladder of Participation' and the theories of Paulo Friere. Hart's model provided a way of evaluating the level of participation afforded to children and young people; hence it was directed more towards establishing whether the principles of children's rights were in place, rather than putting forward a particular theoretical perspective. On the other hand Friere (1972) provided a theory of participation, which emphasised problematization

**Figure 2.1: Ladder of Participation (see page 23)**



Hart (1995)

through dialogue. In other words participation comes about by questioning and challenging the current 'given reality'. In this way there are strong connections between the theoretical perspectives of Friere (1972) and socio-cultural theories developed from the work of Vygotsky (1962).

In relating these models and theories to the status of children's rights, Franklin and Franklin's (1996) summary remains appropriate:

' The UN Convention ....has offered a rallying point... it also offers a programme of proposals designed to empower children and young people. The future of children's rights ... is uncertain in the current political climate with its emphasis on retreating from any progressive policy. But the hope must surely be that in... the next phase, children will be the key political actors, seeking to establish their rights to protection but also their rights to participate in a range of settings which extend beyond the social and welfare arenas... the future is open' (p. 111).

Such a programme would move the children's rights movement away from adults arguing on behalf of children to putting the direct voice of children themselves at the forefront. This would represent children and young people initiating and implementing their own ideas, with adult advice and support. Mapped on to Hart's (1995) model it would be the equivalent of 'step 8'; in effect giving agency to children. However the impact of any theory or model of participation in education has remained very limited. Research undertaken on pupil's perspectives (for example Alderson, 2000; Cruddas, Dawn, Freedman, Pierre-MacFarlane and Smith, 2000; Davies and Brember, 1997; 1999; Kerr, Lines, Blenkinsop and Schagen, 2001; Lord and Harland, 2000; NSPCC, 1995) suggested there was little evidence that current processes of consultation were effective in making a difference for pupils.

'To see the problems about schools you have to see through the appearance and into what may even be the depression of children experiencing school. They know the problems. The adults need to listen to them and not dismiss their opinions'. (James, 12, quoted in Burke and Grosvenor, 2003, p. 7)

in education has limited the willingness and ability of practitioners in schools to encourage pupil participation, except perhaps at the margins of school life, and participation would be more accurately represented as 'assigned but informed' (step 4) or even 'tokensim' (step 3). Drawing on Freire (1972), in the absence of a revolutionary educator, children are likely to remain passive masses. How then are pupils currently located within education, such that their participation is so restricted?

## **Discourses that Inform the Current Location of Pupils within Schools**

### **Constructions of learning: Learning for themselves or learning for adults?**

#### **Learning as content**

Part of the answer to the question of why pupil participation appears to be so restricted, crucially relates to current constructions of learning within education and in schools in particular.

There is a rapidly expanding field of theory and research into learning, which is leading to a number of different conceptions of learning. Desforges (2001) argued that teachers and researchers hold rather different and probably contradictory theories, and whilst not wanting to privilege any particular theory, he noted that 'these theories almost pass each other by.' and argued that an attempt was needed at theoretical integration. It could be argued that politicians hold very different views, with the emphasis on quantifiable data, for example as evidenced in published school league tables (Coffield, 2002). Claxton, Atkinson, Osborn and Wallace (1999) suggested that learning was not a homogeneous activity, although many existing approaches have assumed that their representation of learning applies to learning as a whole. Given the many conceptions of learning (see Carnell and Lodge, 2002; Watkins, Carnell, Lodge, Wagner and Whalley, 2001 for further discussion) particular approaches, related to different theoretical models appear to have held and continue to hold greater influence in

schools and therefore have impacted more on the relationship between pupil participation and learning.

The view that appears to remain strongest is that generally associated with the everyday meaning of learning: learning is 'getting more knowledge' – 'what did you learn at school today' 'You learn something new every day'. Desforges (2001) described this as the common conception within teaching, a folk psychology of 'knowledge as stuff'. Knowledge is material that you transfer into the student and assess by checking the contents list. The orientation is on performance: what can you show you have learnt (Watkins, Carnell, Lodge, Wagner and Whalley, 2001). This would generally be seen as the traditional model of teaching. In this model the teacher provides the knowledge and the pupil receives it. Pupils are mostly engaged in seat work, drill and practice. Friere (1972) described this contents model of learning as the 'banking' concept of education, 'the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing and storing the deposits' (p. 46); and rather more vividly, Claxton, Atkinson, Osborn and Wallace (1999) saw this view of learning as 'cutting it up and feeding it to passive learners'. Learning is seen as transmission, with the role of the teacher to 'pass on' their knowledge.

This transmission model would seem to be exemplified in the current 'standards' agenda of education. Barber (2001) talked of creating 'a culture in which everyone takes responsibility for student outcomes' (p. 21). Knowledge is the rational, intelligent, conscious and above all measurable. Pupils then are seen as units of attainment progressing at the desired level through the prescribed national curriculum achieving appropriate levels of SATs and GCE examination results and going on to fulfil an important economic role. The focus is on improving teaching largely by focusing on the teachers' capacity to teach: more highly skilled teachers will be more effective in delivering the curriculum to children and young people. The problem with this model of learning is that both teachers and learners are undifferentiated other than in terms of ability. Teachers and learners who fail to achieve are those who lack the attributes to achieve, either because of poor teaching skills or lack of intelligence, motivation

or social background. Individual identities continue to be shaped and regulated by institutional procedures, practices and discourses. In this construction of learning, pupils' compliance is more desirable than their questioning and challenge.

However learning, viewed from a different interactionist perspective, can be seen as more negotiable. Drawing on the work of Dewey and Issacs, learning can be experiential and the learner active. This process model of learning places the emphasis on collaboration in the construction of knowledge. Knowledge is not static: it becomes meaningful through questioning, investigation, analysis, reorganization and reflection. In this sense it is a dynamic process, which equally engages teachers and learners in activities, drawing on social and emotional as well as cognitive aspects. Knowledge is developed through personal meanings and experience-it is socially constructed. It challenges the expert to novice relationship between teacher and pupil.

This constructivist models argues that pupils learn best by actively making sense of new knowledge, making meaning from it and mapping this into their existing knowledge (for example: Bruner, 1996; Piaget, 1967). Without the active role of the learner, knowledge is difficult to assimilate. Further, from a social constructionist perspective, knowledge is socially and culturally situated and acquired through social action (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1999).

Individuals construct different 'realities', 'meanings, and 'truths' depending on the assumptions, expectations, theories, concepts and language to which they are culturally exposed and from which their perspectives are formed. Constructions arise knowingly and unknowingly and influence the actions the individuals choose to take. It follows that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' interpretations, just different ones – all of which may be 'valid' within a 'constructed' group, system or culture. These constructions are evidenced in the discourses, which people use to communicate one with another and in turn these discourses influence and develop current constructions. Building on Vygotsky's theories, socio-cultural psychology stresses the role of collaborative interaction in the movement from intrapersonal to interpersonal functioning (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978; Werstch, 1985, 1991). Emphasis is placed

on the construction of knowledge through interaction with more knowledgeable others in mediated social and cultural settings. Thus, social processes are seen as giving rise to individual processes, which are both seen as being mediated by tools created by the culture (Rogoff, 1990). In all these models then the importance of the learner's active role is emphasised, alongside a focus on the process rather than content of learning. Learning of itself becomes the object of attention. Pupil participation is key.

Many of the 'new' range of approaches to promoting learning within schools and classrooms could be seen to be allied to constructivist models of learning. Much of the focus is on 'meta' processes, in particular 'metacognition'. Thinking skills programmes (Blagg, Ballinger and Gardner, 1988; De Bono, 1992; Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman and Miller, 1980; Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan, 1980; McGuinness, 1999; Shayer and Adey, 2002) are now widely believed to be encouraging more effective learning by introducing ways of knowing about thinking to students. Similarly, reflective or problem solving based learning (Wallace, 2000; Watkins, Carnell, Lodge, Wagner and Whalley, 2001), attention to learning styles (Honey and Mumford, 1986; Kolb, 1984; Smith, 1996) and theories of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1991) are seen as recognising the need for a broader more diverse understanding of learning. More recently greater attention has been given to developing 'emotionally intelligent' schools (DfEE, 1999; Goleman, 1996) extending beyond cognition to consider the inter and intrapersonal skills, included in Gardner's work.

All these approaches emphasise the need to view the learner as an active participant, however it is remarkable what little impact ideas about the construction of knowledge have had on pedagogy. The pedagogy advocated by Bruner (1996), Dewey (1916), Montessori (1912), Vygotsky (1962), the Reggio Emilia Approach (Valentine, 1999) is only experienced in isolated pockets. Although there is an ongoing debate about learning, the practice of teaching and learning within schools has changed very little over the last 50 or more years (Watkins, Carnell, Lodge, Wagner and Whalley, 2001). In general school continues to donate knowledge and learning is often experienced as tedium. Osborn (2001) found in a



comparative study that English pupils were the least likely to enjoy school and the most likely to want to leave as soon as possible. Coles and Robinson (1989) argued that we can teach thinking skills but were unwilling to make the necessary pedagogical changes.

‘an explicit focus on learning is an infrequent experience at any stage of education, and many learners show signs that they have little understanding of their own learning processes.... The dominant discourse is of performance and transmission’ (Watkins, Carnell, Lodge, Wagner and Whalley, 2001, p. 7).

This situation was further compounded by the way many teachers and pupils saw learning as the teacher’s responsibility.

“It seems fair to say that in many traditional classrooms the teacher does most of the learning. (Ingram and Worrall, 1993, p. 11)

In this climate the introduction of active learning partnerships is unlikely to grow, especially as the promoted ‘world-view’ of education in England is that of ‘raising standards’

‘To achieve significant, measurable improvements in the attainment, aspirations, motivation and self esteem of gifted and talented pupils’. (Dracup, 2003).

These conceptions of learning as ‘contents’ and ‘process’ are neither exclusive nor definitive but perhaps represent a one of the key current issues about teaching and learning (see Coffield, 2002; Watkins, Carnell, Lodge, Wagner and Whalley, 2001)

In this setting Holt’s (1965) view still rings true:

‘Children are subject peoples. School for them is a kind of jail. Do they not, to some extent, escape and frustrate the relentless, insatiable pressure of their elders by withdrawing the most intelligent and creative parts of their minds from the scene’.  
(p.164).

“ I left because I felt that the regime was oppressive and, like most oppressive regimes, coercive and difficult to change. I resented being told what to wear, what to think, what to believe, what to say and when to say it. In the average school the

children are the underclass, so low in status that they are not worth listening to”.

(Lorna, 14, quoted in Burke and Grosvenor, 2003, p. 98)

“The problem is that teachers and pupils often conspire in perpetuating a false security that manifests itself in reliance on right answers and on a view of the expert as one who knows rather than as one who uses knowledge to refocus doubt (Rudduck, 1991, p. 33).

As one of the more dominant discourses informing our conception of learning remains that of ‘content filling empty minds’, it is difficult to reconcile this construction with active promotion of pupil participation, especially in the prevailing government climate of quantifiable outcomes.

## Learning as achievement through measurement

The continuing dominance of a discourse of learning as content is particularly evidenced in the current notions of achievement through measurement. Although there has been and continues to be substantial critique of objective assessment of ability, there remains a powerful and pervasive belief that educational assessment can be detached from its operational context. Much of this practice is underpinned by notions of intelligence, which have captured the territory of assessment and inhibited debate about other ways of viewing success in education. It has been argued that these traditional forms of assessment have inhibited learning; although many pupils may be encouraged by competition, many are undermined by a fear of failure and a belief in their own lack of ability (Claxton, Atkinson, Osborn and Wallace, 1999). Evidence suggests the constant evaluative context of education is both disruptive of learning and disturbing to pupils. Harland, Kinder, Ashworth, Montgomery, Moor and Wilkin, (1999) suggested that tests were motivating but disturbed progression, balance, manageability and relevance of curriculum. They led to a focus on external rather than intrinsic motivation. Pollard (1985) identified the main source of stress in school as

teacher power and the evaluative context. The latter has become considerably more pronounced over the ensuing 15 years and has led to statements that testing has now become disastrous for learning (Kohn, 2000).

Interestingly previous attempts to move away from the rigidity of this type of assessment have proved successful. Self-assessment by pupils was encouraged by the DES and WO (1988)

‘Self assessment by pupils, even at a primary age, has a part to play by encouraging a clear understanding of what is expected of them, motivation to reach it, a sense of pride in achievements and a realistic appraisal of strengths and weaknesses that need to be tackled’. (section 7.19).

The introduction of Records of Achievement improved motivation because it enabled a dialogue between student and teacher and encouraged students to set their own learning targets. Indeed, Black and William (1998) in reviewing the usefulness of assessment concluded that the principal purpose of assessment is to support learning rather than accountability and to enable pupils to understand the ways in which they can contribute and become responsible for aspects of their own progress. However such approaches have generally failed to dislodge the dominant discourse of test results and league tables as evidence of increasing ‘standards’.

This emphasis on measurable outcomes would seem to be at odds with the current interest in greater flexibility in learning, for example the focus on problem solving, thinking skills, and willingness to accept and to respond to change. This latter recognition of the need for diversity of learning is perhaps evidenced most clearly in adult professional development where the emphasis is on a mixture of skills, knowledge, experience and in particular reflection and self reflection. This alternative view would then be that

‘Learning is a messy business which is influenced in idiosyncratic ways for any given individual by the complex mixture of understanding, beliefs and attitudes which is the product of past learning experiences’ (Weedon, Winter and Broadfoot, 2001, p. 100)

and as such evaluation should reflect this diversity. Fielding (1999b) argued that target setting has considerable potential but can be profoundly destructive of educational well being. He presented a series of alternative practices centring on the experience of target setting from the standpoint of the students themselves. He argued that the effective school movement has an overriding emphasis on outcomes, in which student interests were overtaken by the school's need to meet performance criteria. In contrast the person centred school enabled learning conversations between student and teacher, which were genuinely representative of a learning community. The person centred school was 'about the explicit development of students as agents of their own and each other' educational transformation' (Fielding, 2001, p. 150). An example of this approach, in operation over 20 years ago, was that introduced by Ingram and Worrell (1993),

'We were concerned about how many children brought to the classroom interests, motivation, curiosity, knowledge and ideas that our conventional teaching behaviours somehow failed to nurture – and in many cases de-powered and devalued. The attraction of negotiated partnership grew not from the child-centred practices or from reading 'progressive' literature but from a feeling of unease and unhappiness with the conventional classroom relationship of teacher and pupil'. (p. 14).

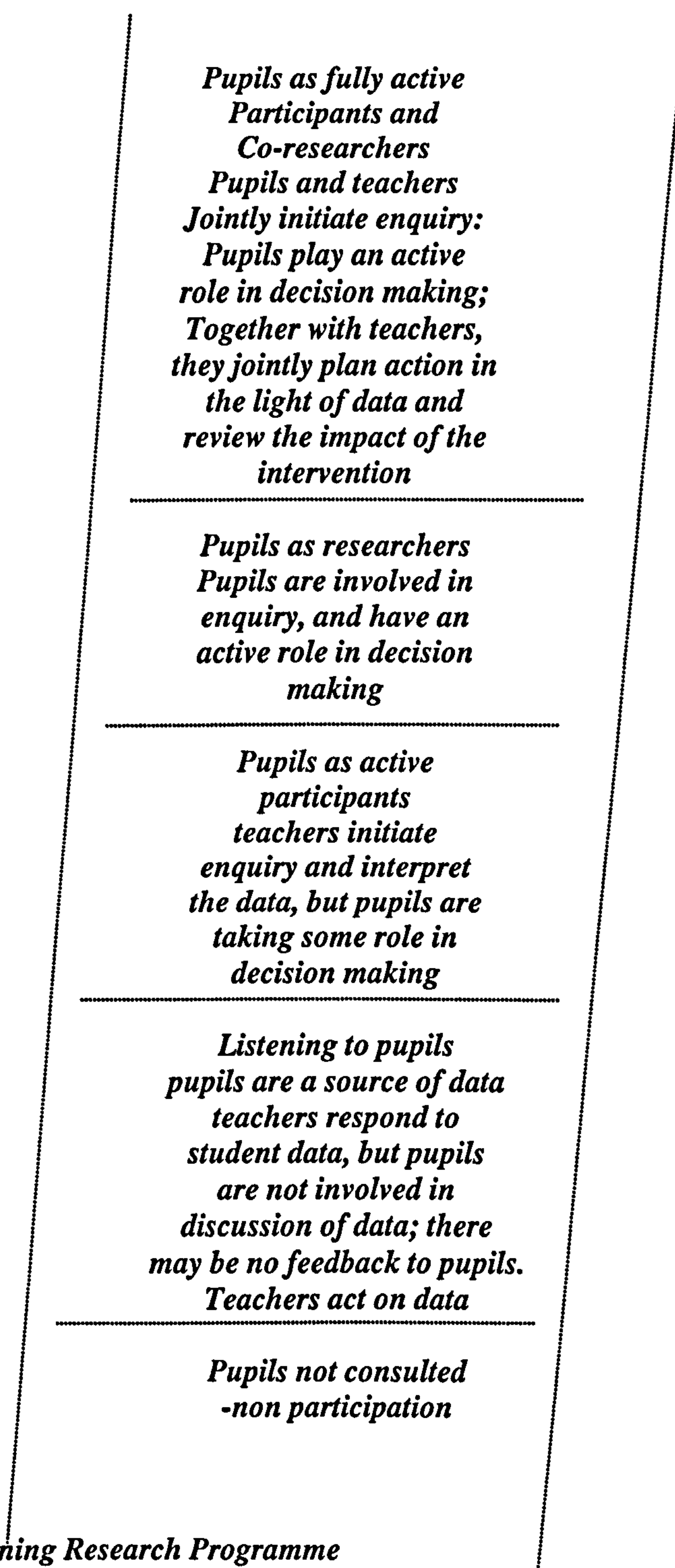
So student voices were heard and more importantly were actively engaged in constructing the framework for their own learning.

Viewing learning as a dialogue leads to a consideration of possible models of pupil participation, which might support the greater involvement of pupils within schools.

## Models of learning and pupil participation

Fielding (2001) and Rudduck and Flutter (2000) both argued that there was a need to promote a different model of learning or models of learning that supported school ethos where teachers consult with young people about their learning experience. Meighan (1988) proposed one

Figure 2.2: 'Consulting pupils' : The ladder of pupil participation (see page 35)



**Teaching and Learning Research Programme**  
**Consulting pupils about teaching and learning.**  
[www.homerton.cam.ac.uk/research/esrc.html](http://www.homerton.cam.ac.uk/research/esrc.html)  
[www.consultingpupils.com](http://www.consultingpupils.com)

possible model of evaluation that considered different spaces for pupils in the curriculum:

- a consultative curriculum, where the programme was imposed but there were regular opportunities for learners to be consulted;
- a negotiated curriculum, where there was discussion and a contract was agreed as to the nature of the course of study to be undertaken;
- a democratic curriculum, where groups of learners write, implement and review their own curriculum, starting out with a blank piece of paper.

Meighan's 'spaces' would seem to effectively map on to the 'Ladder of Pupil Participation' (ESRC, 2004; See Figure 2.2 above), which, together, might offer a framework for curriculum evaluation. This ladder was developed as part of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Programme, about teaching and learning, as an evaluative tool for schools to assess the level of participation within their particular setting. It views research as a routine tool of enquiry on which to base decisions about organisation and curriculum delivery. As such full participation for pupils becomes a co-researching model in which either pupil or teacher can initiate enquiry, plan intervention and review the outcome in order to decide on action. This would seem to match the democratic curriculum put forward by Meighan (1988). Such a re-evaluation of schooling as a dialogue between teacher and pupil leads to an analysis of the kind of learning environment, which would provide for to-day's challenges. Carnell and Lodge (2002) argued for 'learning communities', which they described as

'the relationships that activate the purposes of the community, ensuring that learning is visible and explicitly valued, and that success, achievement and progress are celebrated by all' (p 140).

Bentley (1998) argued for creative learning environments, which developed the capacity of individuals to solve problems within and through the context in which they are found. These ideas, which emphasise learning as about seizing and responding to opportunities and being nourished and embedded in social relationships and values, mirror notions of community cohesion developed by Cattle (2001). Lynch (cited in Cattle, 2001) considered the concepts

of community and cohesion as social capital and offered a number of 'domains' as a way providing a possible set of measures of community cohesion. Hayes (2002) has modified these domains to provide a framework for looking at inclusive practice in schools (See Figure 2.3 below).

**Figure 2.3: An adaptation of the domains of social capital applied to pupils in an inclusive school.**

Domain	Description
Empowerment	Pupils are involved in making choices about their own learning and are involved in decisions and choices about the wider social environment that affects them.
Participation	Pupils participate fully in the learning and social activities in school
Associational activity and common purpose	Pupils co-operate with each other in both formal and informal groups
Supporting networks and reciprocity	Pupils support one another for either mutual or one-sided gain. There is an expectation that help would be given or received from others when needed
Collective norms and values	Pupils and staff share common values and norms for behaviour
Trust	Pupils trust one another and the staff and support agencies who work with them
Safety	Pupils feel safe in school and do not restrict their use of parts of the school or aspects of school life because of fear.
Belonging	Pupils feel connected and have a sense of belonging to the school

Hayes, B. (2002) adapted from the Lynch analysis of the domains of social capital (Cantle, 2001)

There is a notable similarity between the ideas outlined by all these authors, which focus on empowering individuals within their communities to decide on and bring about change for themselves. In essence they propose a model of learning through dialogue. How then have these views influenced moves towards pupil participation in schools?

# **Decision Makers or Sources of Data? : Current Constructions of Pupil Participation**

## **The absence of the pupil voice**

There is much evidence to suggest that rather than promoting pupil participation, schools continue to inhibit active pupil involvement. It is questionable whether the pupil voice is one that is generally heard in schools (Burke and Grosvenor, 2003), except by default. Much research (Anderson, 1995; Fullan, 1991; Levin, 1995; Nieto, 1994; Soo Hoo, 1993) has suggested that traditionally the student voice is overlooked. This can have damaging implications. Without a legitimate voice teacher- pupil relationships are often perceived as adversarial and potentially confrontational. Regardless of the intended involvement of pupils, they will organise themselves to manage the classroom setting in the way that they want;

‘teachers and pupils are continuously creating relationships, changing them, shifting the basis of them, finding new ways of getting round them, plugging holes in one’s own versions, detecting weaknesses in others’ (Woods, 1990, p. 148)

Although, ‘To some people it is still avant-garde and therefore a dangerous idea that pupils should be consulted at all’ (Wade and Moore, 1993, p. 80), the movement raising questions about this absence of the pupil voice seems to be international. In the U.K. Wood (2003), Rudduck and Flutter (2000), in USA, Erickson and Schultz (1992) identified that no research had been undertaken that placed students at centre of attention. Vaughn (2002) expressed concern about the negative impact of teacher- centred classrooms on learning. In Europe, Osborn (2001) identified the different impact of cultures within Europe on pupil’s experience of learning in school, and Bishop (2003) extended this argument further to highlight the damaging effect of teacher control of knowledge where pupils were perceived as from a ‘deficit group’.



This movement emphasised how the pupils' voice should be seen as an increasingly important element in understanding teaching and schooling more generally. There was a necessity to consult with pupils because

- they are consumers;
- they can influence school improvement, though Rudduck and Flutter (2000) argue pupils do not have overall perspective on how learning might be differently structured but are able to present commentary on particular experiences;
- they have a lot to say on what Rudduck and Flutter (2000) call the 'conditions of learning' within schools: relationships, ethos, respect, status etc;
- they will be citizens of the future, who will be asked to make contribution to society and make decisions for themselves and others. They therefore need to learn how and need to experience the principles of citizenship (Hodgkin 1998);
- they can improve their own learning;
- they have unique information about their experience of school as a pupil;
- they have a right to be consulted;
- there is a legal duty to seek their views.

A number of studies (Brown and McIntyre, 1993; Cooper and McIntyre, 1996; Francis, 2000; Keys and Fernandes, 1993; MacBeath, Myers, K, and Demetriou, H.,2001; Pollard, Broadfoot, Crool, Osborn and Abbott, 1994; Pollard and Thiessen, 1997; Pollard and Triggs, 2000) have shown that pupils across junior and secondary schools have 'views and opinions about teachers, teaching and the classroom climate, including the subtler aspect of negotiation and control that counts as knowledge' (McCallum, Hargreaves and Gipps, 2000, p. 278).

When consulted pupils identify a number of key features they would want in schools; respect, fairness, autonomy, intellectual challenge, social support and security. Pupils were interested in changing structures that cast them in a marginal role. They wanted autonomy; they wanted school to be fair; they wanted to be individuals; they wanted to be important. School should be seen as a whole experience, not just lessons.

Rudduck and Flutter (1998) indicated that the curriculum may not be helpful to learning, for example by seeing subject based knowledge as best, there was an undervaluing of practical knowledge. Harland, Kinder, Ashworth, Montgomery, Moor and Wilkin (1999) highlighted that too little time was devoted to practical work, and there was limited opportunity to explore links between subjects. The priority that was given to written work over oral work, and to individual rather than group learning could undermine the positive learning experience of pupils. Pupils identified achievements that were not valued within school and were therefore unacknowledged, for example undertaking reading which was not usually available within the curriculum (Burke and Grosvenor, 2003; Pollard and Triggs, 2000; Rudduck, Chaplain and Wallace, 1996).

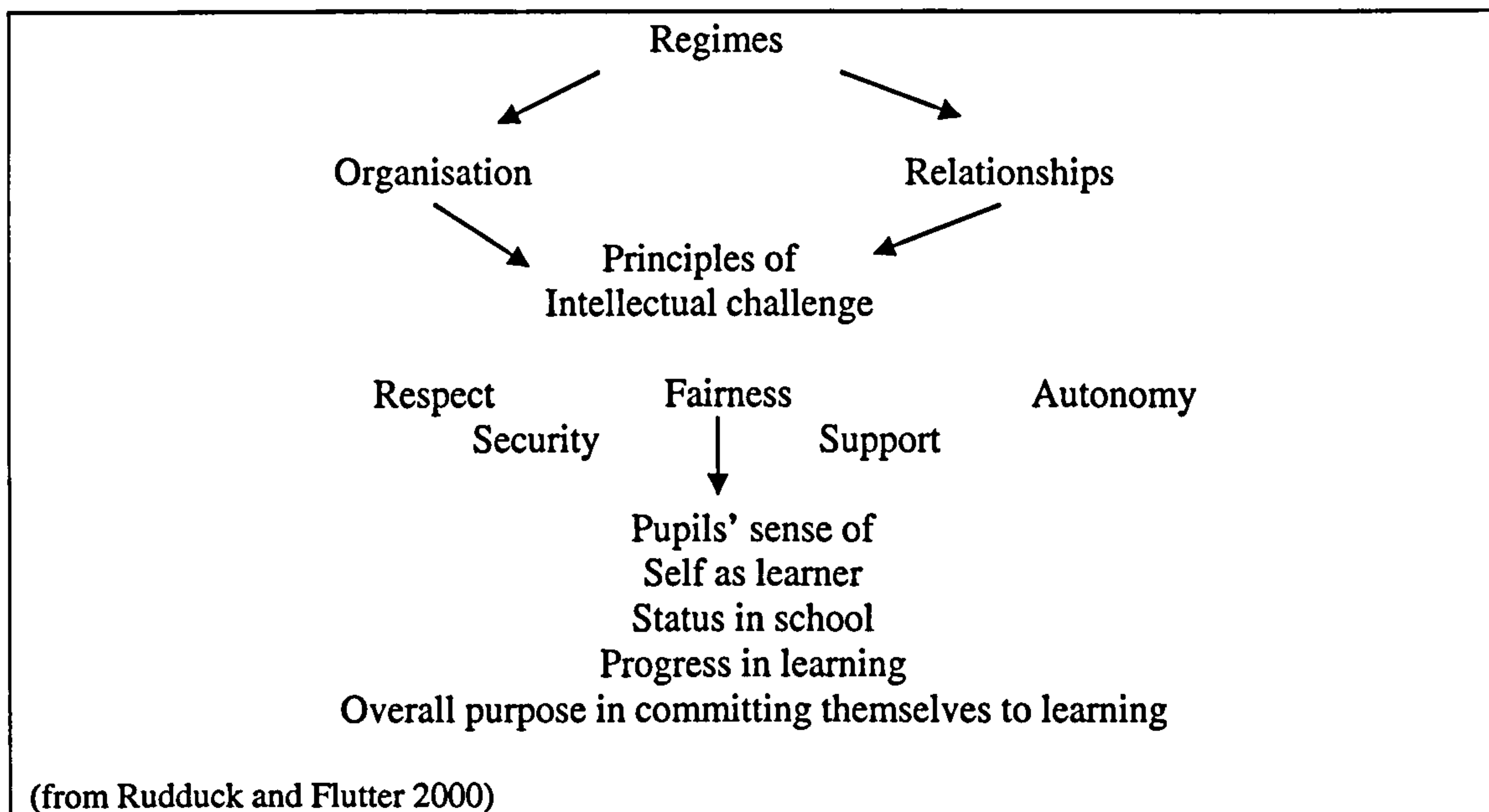
Pupils could identify with whom they work well and with whom they do not. They could address problems, for example, how to reduce noise. Overall pupils did want to succeed (Phelan, Davidson and Cao, 1992; Rudduck, Chaplain and Wallace, 1996). As Lemcke (2002) identified, children know how they need to learn.

However despite this information from pupils themselves about their experience of school and learning, these views were not generally impacting on or changing schools. Rudduck and Flutter (1998; 2000) saw one reason for this as, what they described as, the 'conditions of learning' that do not take account of the social maturity of young people in secondary schools. They defined 'the conditions of learning' as

' the set of structures and relationships, common across the vast majority of secondary schools, that define what 'a pupil' is, that determine the regularities of learning, and that crucially exert a powerful influence on young people's sense of purpose in learning and their pattern of achievement' (Rudduck, Chaplain and Wallace, 1996, p. 173).

Rudduck and Flutter (2000) presented a model of 'conditions for learning in school' (See Figure 2.4 below), which they argued shape pupils 'attitudes to learning, and their view of themselves as learners'.

**Figure 2.4: Conditions of Learning (see page 39)**



## **New opportunities for pupil participation**

Rudduck and Flutter (2000) went on to argue that the school improvement agenda was an opportunity for hearing the voices of pupils: a way of looking at the deep structures of schooling that hold values and habits in place. The school improvement agenda has brought teachers, researchers and policy makers together and in this context pupil participation was being addressed. Indeed work on school effectiveness has highlighted pupil involvement as a factor in success (Reynolds, 1995). Both the Index for Inclusion (2002) and Inspecting Schools Framework (2004) specifically say that greater account should be taken of the views of pupils and surveying pupils' views through questionnaires should not diminish the discussions with pupils during the inspection. Inspectors should also take opportunities to talk with groups of pupils, for example, year group representatives, the school council or other pupil forums. However, Hopkins (2001) saw the school improvement agenda as focussing on outcomes-higher achievement- rather than on the process of how school was organised. Gray and Reynolds (1996) stated that there was no evidence of consulting with pupils about school improvement. Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore (1995) in constructing the indicators for 'Success against the odds' noted a number where pupils could be consulted but it was unclear

if they were. Overall then the school improvement agenda may provide limited access for pupils to be actively involved in decision making within their schools, and Duffield, Allan, Turner and Morris (2000) noted that the pupils perceptions of school life found little place in the standards discourse. (p. 263).

## **The difficulties of bringing about pupil participation**

**‘The difficulty lies with the view that change is often seen as a mechanical or technical process, by introducing or tinkering with surface structures, change will follow, however school change which will enable the involvement of pupils as active players in the education system’ (Hodgkin, 1998, p. 11),**

**and will involve transformation (Fielding 1999).**

**Young (1999) described the curriculum of the future as representing**

- a transformative concept of knowledge which emphasises its power to give learners a sense that they can act on the world;**
- a focus on the creation of new knowledge as well as the transmission of existing knowledge;**
- an emphasis on the interdependence of knowledge areas and on the relevance of school knowledge to everyday problems’ (p. 469-470).**

**This echoes Hopkins (2001) notion of emancipatory change, where the focus was on the learning and achievement of students, and may reflect Friere’s (1972) view of education as ‘an act of knowing not of memorization’ (p. 13) and certainly needs to take account of**

**‘Learners differ not just in the dominant disposition they bring with them to learning in general. They possess different repertoires of learning strategies: different both in the nature and the range of strategies that are potentially available. They differ in the extent to which they are locked into one style as opposed to selecting a strategy to meet the perceived needs of a particular situation. They differ in the ways they interpret and give weight to the perceived rewards and risks of engagement. They**

differ in sophistication and availability of knowledge and skill base that relates to the learning task. And they differ in their ability (and their disposition) to maintain a reflective or metacognitive self awareness as learning proceeds, so that strategic changes of tack can be made when current strategies are failing to deliver anticipated learning outcomes' (Claxton, Atkinson, Osborn and Wallace, 1999, p. 13).

There may need to be a consideration of whether it is possible to reconcile the institution of school, as developed from the 1902 Balfour Act, with the current understanding of learning in an ever changing world and current views on children's rights and pupil participation. Schools operate within routines, behaviours and organisational structures, which are not in keeping with the opportunities and resources for learning within our current society (Bentley, 2001).

Fielding (2001) noted that

'it is still too early to make a reasonable judgement about whether or not the current wave of interest in student voice has within it the seeds of transformation. On the one hand, there is much that suggests an uncomfortably conformist and controlling reading of these new developments. On the other hand, at its best and most adventurous, there is much to be optimistic about in the emerging student voice movement: there does seem to be a small number of examples of 'prefigurative practice' (p. 107).

Is it time to look for radical change?

## **Constructing Professional Practice to Enable Pupil Participation**

I have argued that there remains considerable discomfort with the notion of empowering children and young people in general and in schools in particular. This stems is a large part from what Alanen and Mayall (2001) described as 'generational order'; children are constituted as a group in relation to and secondary to adults as 'not yet adult'. In this

conception, childhood becomes a preparation for adulthood, rather than as valuable for itself. Schools play a key part in this preparation for adulthood, by providing an environment which offers a rich information base and whose success can be judged by the amount of knowledge absorbed by the pupils. The central purpose of school then becomes to teach pupils skills that they will need as future adults, rather than to create question and challenge. Such a purpose is hard to reconcile with models of learning as dialogue or pupils as co-researchers despite the increasing force of this movement (for example Fielding, 2001; Rudduck and Flutter, 2000). Within these current discourses informing our construction of children, learning and pupil participation discussed in the previous sections, how can educational psychologists create a professional practice that enables the learner to express their views and more importantly take greater control of their own learning; to feel empowered by achieving a higher step on the 'Ladder of Participation' (Hart, 1995)?

Many educational psychology services have introduced a consultative model of practice (MacHardy, Carmichael and Proctor, 1996; Wagner, 2000). In these models, consultation is described as a collaborative and recursive approach underpinned by transparency

'Transparency helps promote collaboration and skill transfer. When Educational Psychologists clarify what is appropriate to their role in the system, and work out ways of explaining it clearly to a range of partners, they increase the engagement and contribution of those partners' (Wagner, 2000 p. 13).

The psychology informing the model emphasises the importance of individual meanings and the social construction of understanding. The individual and the system are not distinct: the individual and their understanding can be seen as exemplifying the organisation (Quicke, 2000). Educational psychologists might then be able to use this model to work with the child or young person to share the child's understanding of their educational world and to enable them to identify what actions may be open to them to undertake positive change. Indeed, participation and involvement of pupils has been consistently promoted by many educational psychologists (for example Burden, 1996; Gersch, 1996; Jelly, Fuller and Byers, 2000; Roller,

1998; Woolfson and Harker, 2002); however this way of working is not unproblematic as it demands 'not just a technical change in practice but a political change in focus and approach' (Hobbs, Todd and Taylor, 2000, p. 113). Such political change invites the reaction of inhibiting forces, in particular

- the location of psychological practice within the positivist paradigm, which directs attention towards a search for facts rather than meanings.
- the location of educational psychology services within special educational needs perpetuates more traditional approaches with a focus on deficits and deficiencies within individual pupils (Stobie, 2002).

## **The location within a positivist paradigm; the construction of facts rather than meanings: subjects as objects**

Educational psychologists are keen to demonstrate that professional practice is informed by psychological theories and is based on reliable and relevant research evidence (Educational and Child Psychology, 2002, 19 (3)). Particularly now in an educational climate of accountability, it is important that educational psychologists are seen to be effective applied psychologists whose work is embedded in evidence based practice. In short, there is seen to be a pressing need to identify 'what works'. However there is considerable diversity amongst practitioners about what evidence-based practice might mean. Whilst diversity might be considered a strength (Lunt, 1999), it can lead to disagreement, polarisation and rather rigid defence of competing paradigms. In the current context the more dominant discourses within the psychological tradition and within professional practices surrounding educational psychology (for example, medicine, psychiatry, other applied psychologies, and educational attainment and testing) continue to hold sway. For the most part, this discourse represents a positivist view which privileges particular types of knowledge and claims this knowledge as 'truth', a reflection of the real world, and thereby locates other contradictory or different knowledge as less valid or invalid. The process of identifying the 'real' world is ideally

through carefully controlled experimentation that can isolate and demonstrate causal links between events or activities which when manipulated produce change. Such best quality research is known as the 'gold standard' (Frederickson, 2002). This positivist view of reality is one that is adopted by many professionals and non-professionals alike as it presents the possibility and even the expectation of an answer (Fox, 2002). If we know that 'x' causes 'y', then we can change 'x' and 'y' will stop happening. The positivist view holds out the hope of the expert taking the problem away by providing a solution. However, even within this paradigm, there is recognition of the challenges posed in establishing evidence-based practice in professional practice because of the complexity and diversity of the settings within which educational psychologists work (Webster, Webster and Feiler, 2002).

Alternative paradigms, which counter what can be viewed as the reductionist stance of the positivist paradigm, seek to highlight this complexity of human experience and the interrelationships between language, culture and society. Constructivist approaches hold that individuals, groups and organisations construct their own unique interpretations of events through their understanding of language (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1999). Within such approaches, the focus is on exploring these meanings rather than looking for causalities. The language and actions of the psychologist, then, are as important as that of the 'client' (Billington, 2002). Psychologists bring their own constructions to any setting and there is a need to examine these constructions and how new constructions or meanings are created through the interaction. Evidenced based practice then needs to examine the professional language that is described as psychological knowledge and how this is seen to differ from accounts given by non professionals. In this way, we might consider how words condense and define meanings which then are used to construct a world view and structure our experience and understanding. When these words belong to a professional group, which 'explains' the experience of others, they support and foster a relationship based on an imbalance of power (Foucault, 1970). In seeking to establish evidence based practice we could look to develop a professional practice that empowers others to understand and manage their own questions that



arise from their own experience and understanding. Educational psychologists might then seek to work to co-construct change that is specific and local rather than general and universal (Gameson, Rhydderch, Ellis and Carroll, 2003). In this way practice may build cumulatively based on a cycle of critical reflection feeding back into professional activity.

The impact of this discourse on genuine consultation with children and young people highlights the necessity to go beyond simple questioning to find ways to co-construct a different meaning to the discussion.

## **The location in special educational needs: The construction of pathology rather than diversity.**

Whilst many educational psychologists would want to draw on psychology from the constructionist perspective, they are often operating within the context of a positivist worldview where the expectations and meanings attributed to their role lead to particular domains of response (Miller and Todd, 2002). In particular when talking with children and young people, there are expectations that have already been established around the role of an educational psychologist. This often relates to the identification of problems and deficits and a need to produce 'help'. This routine location within special educational needs highlights the difficulties that arise from the different belief systems underpinning practice. Children and young people as a group have limited access to real participation. Those deemed to have special educational needs are even more marginalized. Educational Psychologists are routinely located within the domain of special educational needs with a focus on the identification of problems and deficits.

'The Warnock framework of assessing children's individual strengths and differences can also be operated according to different psychological models of causation. Patterns of strengths and difficulties can be interpreted as fairly constant over time irrespective of current environmental factors or they can be seen as more open to change in response to assets and constraints in the environment' (Norwich, 2000, p. 11).

In searching to deliver a professional practice that is evidence based, it is tempting to draw on psychological knowledge based on the positivist tradition because it appears to derive from 'quality' research. However in drawing on this knowledge there is a need to consider

'the linguistic and social mechanisms inside which much of our knowledge about human performance is located and formulated' (Billington, 2002, p. 32).

In applying knowledge, we need to examine how that knowledge was produced and how it channels our thinking about and understanding of others' experience. The assumptions underlying 'special educational needs' are particularly problematic as they focus the psychologist upon the child, parent or teachers in a search for identification of difficulty and routes to remediation. 'Special educational needs' conveys notions of being empirical; that which can be identified, measured and treated. It is almost impossible not to respond to the concept of 'need'. It demands a response on behalf of those who are to unable to do anything for themselves, those who are helpless and dependent. This kind of scrutiny has led us to pathologise difference (Billington, 2002). Billington suggested that our failure to examine our own actions and language as psychologists has led us to contribute to the creation of knowledge that bears very little resemblance to the reported experience of children or adults. Educational psychologists can find themselves caught into constructing understandings of children, which isolate them from the complexity of relationships between individuals and the society of other individuals.

'But there has to be a clearer idea of what we really need, to cope with the curriculum. We're pretty battered and bruised by our learning experiences. We need the chance to feel right about ourselves and a way to control our learning. Calling us 'special needs' doesn't help. It only makes us appear damaged and different' (Sage, 2000, p. 70).

Allan quotes Lawson 1994 (Allan, 1999, p. 116) in inviting professionals to pathologise themselves as suffering from professional thought disorder (PTD). This is described as a compulsion to analyse and categorise the experience of others.

McDermott (2001) describes this as a culture where

'failure and success define each other into separate corners, and children are evenly divided as if by normal curve, into successful and failing. Among those who fail are those who fail in ways that the system knows how to identify with tests, and these children are called special names. L.D. (learning difficulties) acquires its share of children' (p. 69).

Within this context lies the dilemma of trying to genuinely consult with children. The understandings and language we bring to conversations with children and young people are imbued with constructions that cast their thinking and experience into particular kinds of knowledge. Professional knowledge is largely inaccessible to them, holds a higher value than their own and supports notions of the expert. How then do we talk with, talk about or write about children? How do we create a partnership for consultation? It is by beginning to examine these discourses and make them explicit to children and young people that genuine conversations may begin to take place.

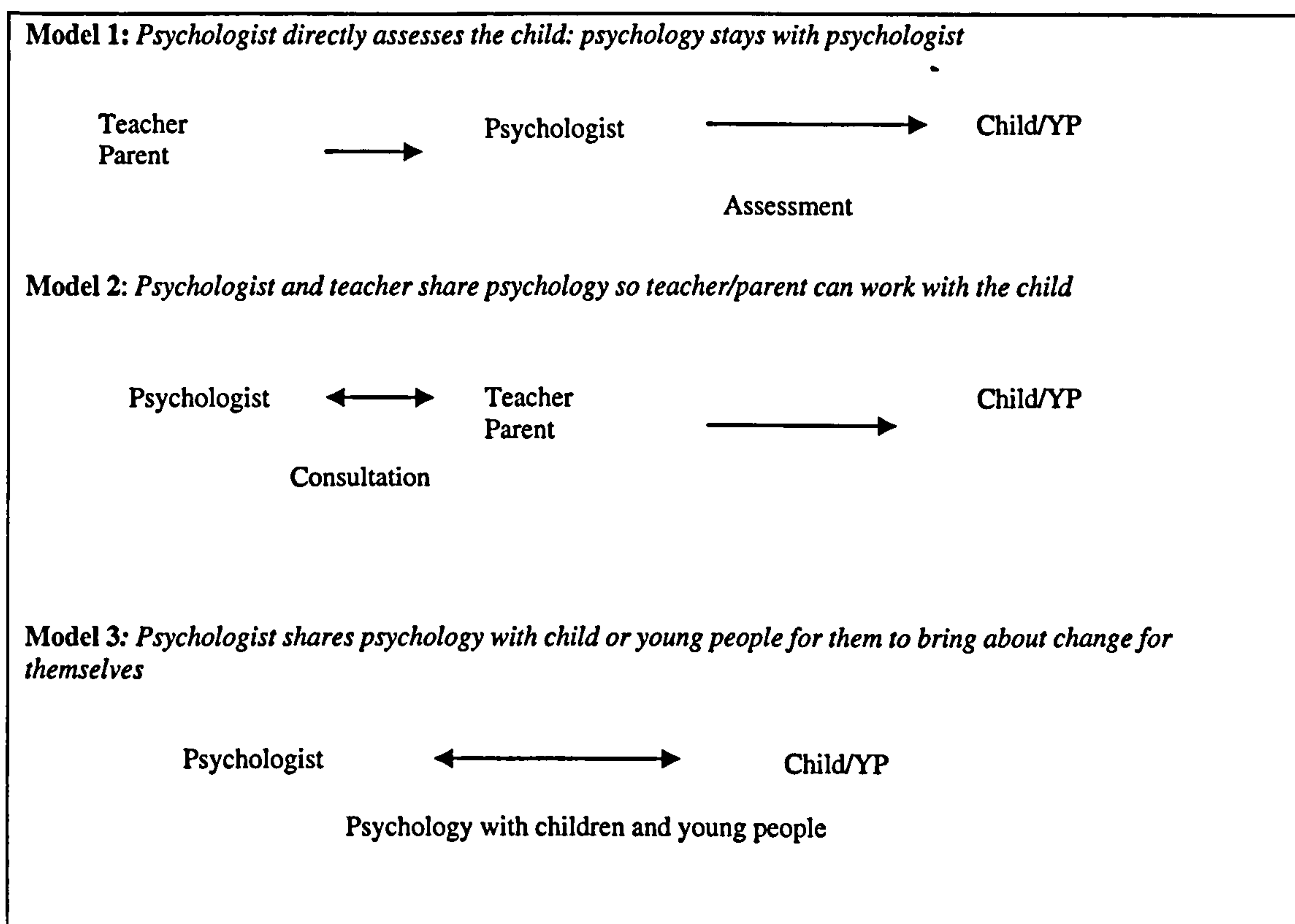
## **A Different Way of Consulting with Pupils**

For many years then, educational psychologists have seen the need for a professional practice that works at a number of levels and draws on an interactionist perspective (Gilham, 1978). The consultative model has been developed and applied as response to the pervading discourses of deficit; however these discourses continue to limit the capacity of educational psychologists to bring about a change in practice (Wedell, 2000). Furthermore, although altering the model of practice continues to be valuable in itself because it de-emphasises the power of the expert and draws out the skills of the consultee, it does little to acknowledge or address the location of the pupil within the educational context. This current location places pupils in a passive position both in terms of impacting on organisational systems and as learners (as discussed in previous sections). In considering pupil empowerment and a possible role for educational psychologists, there is a need to examine the wider perspective

and experience of pupils within schools. There is a need to discover how the application of applied psychology might genuinely provide a way for children and young people to actively contribute within schools and to have a greater understanding of themselves as learners.

Part of the story of the work of educational psychologists has been to 'give psychology away', however one group who have not had direct access to this offer is the pupils. Bringing psychology directly to pupils in the classroom might be a way of enabling them to have a greater understanding of their own learning and of how they might actively contribute within schools. The role of the Educational Psychologist within the classroom would then be to begin an exploration of the learning environment with pupils along the domains outlined by Hayes (2002).

**Figure 2.5: The work of educational psychologists: Using psychology (see page 49)**



This model of practice could then demonstrate a move from previous models of practice, which located both expertise and psychology away from the pupil to one, which gives psychology to the pupil. This is shown in Figure 2.5 (above), where Model 1 presents the work of the psychologist as to assess the child after information has been received from a

teacher or parent. The role of the assessment would usually be seen as identifying the 'problem' and the child would be the 'source of data' in that identification. In Model 2 problem solving or solution finding would be a consultative process between involved adults. In this model the role of the psychologist would be to act as a consultant with no necessary involvement with the child. In model 3, a different way of working is proposed in which the psychologist shares psychology with the child with the aim of co-constructing new meanings. The work of an educational psychologist could then be to focus on creating learning communities where pupils feel empowered to develop and take charge of their own learning. It would include acceptance of difference, of challenge and a shift of power relationships between teacher and student – for learning relationships to work they must be reciprocal. (Bentley 1998). Such views would begin to consider the pathways to participation outlined by Shier (2001) (See Figure 2.6 below), by asking adults working within schools to examine how

**Figure 2.6: Pathways to participation. (Shier 2001)**

Levels of participation	Openings	Opportunities	Obligations
5. Children share power and responsibility for decision making	Are you ready to share some of your adult power with children?	Is there a procedure that enables children and adults to share power and responsibility for decisions?	Is it a policy requirement that children and adults share power and responsibility for decisions?
4. Children are involved in decision making processes	Are you ready to let children join in decision-making processes?	Is there a procedure that enables children join in decision-making processes?	Is it a policy requirement that children must be involved in decision-making processes?
3. Children's views are taken into account.	Are you ready to take children's views into account?	Does your decision making process enable you to take children's views into account?	Is it a policy requirement that children's views must be given due weight in decision-making?
2. Children are supported in expressing their views	Are you ready to support children in expressing their views?	Do you have a range of ideas and activities to help children express their views?	Is it a policy requirement that Children must be supported in expressing their views?
1. Children are listened to	Are you ready to listen to children?	Do you work in way that enables you to listen to children?	Is it a policy requirement that Children must be listened to?
START HERE			

different levels of participation might be implemented and embedded within the organisation. It would address the need to bring transparency.

'It is the right of teachers and students as partners in daily enactments of the classroom, to understand what they are doing and why they are doing it, to recognise

the areas where they can, together, influence and improve the experience of learning and teaching, and to appreciate, each in their own way, that the goal is to extend the possibility of control over one's own working environment and life chances through deeper professional and personal understanding ' (Rudduck, 1991, p. 21).

'learners and teachers should be explicit about the ways in which young people are learning, that is about their learning at a meta level' (Carnell and Lodge, 2002, p. 7)

In an attempt to match this goal, I considered how psychology might be genuinely made available directly to children in the classroom so that they could use it or discard it in a way that was useful to them. The undertaking would be a small attempt to move away from traditional ways of working with children as an educational psychologist and explore a process of consultation that hopefully would be viewed as moving towards a shared construction of learning. The process was located in classroom teaching as the arena where school learning is enacted and formed the basis of the research introduced in Chapter 1. I aimed to challenge, in a small way, the taken for granted constructions of pupils and of the professional practice of educational psychologists that currently hold sway within schools and more widely. I wanted to undertake research that began to share some adult power with pupils, by offering them knowledge usually held by adults. I wanted to explore consulting with pupils through teaching about the psychology of learning.

# **CHAPTER 3**

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research set out to address how I, as an educational psychologist, could genuinely consult with children and young people about their experiences of learning and school through giving them direct access to psychology about learning within the classroom. I identified teaching as a way of providing me with the opportunity to begin a dialogue with pupils about psychology and learning in school. The main research question was then:

- is teaching a way of professionally consulting with pupils?

I structured the focus of the research around an area of my own knowledge and experience, with the aim of providing direct support to pupils at a time of significant change. The following subsidiary research questions were then identified: -

- what understandings of learning would pupils have as they move from primary school (year 6) to secondary school (year 7)?
- how might these understandings develop when introducing year 6 and then year 7 classes to psychology about different ways of learning?
- how might pupils use their knowledge of different ways of learning and of themselves as learners to support their transition from primary to secondary school?

### **An Appropriate Methodology**

In identifying an appropriate methodology, I needed to consider a range of factors, which were:

- the research was located in professional practice, in particular that of educational psychology. The chosen research methodology then had to be appropriate both to examining the everyday experience of professional practice and to examining 'psychology in action' as I worked as an educational psychologist directly with pupils.

- the research focussed on the understandings of pupils about their own learning and as such, the research methodology needed to provide a way of examining these understandings and how these developed during the process of consultation.
- as the research was examining the changes taking place over a transition period, the methodology needed to include a reviewing process in both its planning and implementation to respond to, take account of and incorporate these changes.

I address these factors more fully in the following sections and set out the reasoning behind the selected methodology and methods for the research. I end this chapter by considering ethical issues and the basis for considering the validity of this research which in line with a qualitative methodology, focuses on fruitfulness rather than generalizability.

## **A Methodology for Researching ‘Psychology in Action’**

### **The rationale for choosing a qualitative approach**

There is ongoing unease about the appropriateness of quantitative research methods in both psychological and educational research. In education, there has been a well publicised debate about the quality of educational research over recent years, perhaps initiated by Hargreaves (1996) who lamented the absence of evidence based research and its relevance to everyday classroom experience. Tooley and Darby’s (1998) review of published educational research supported Hargreaves’ criticisms concluding that the majority of published articles were not concerned with raising standards or improving classroom practice, employed sloppy methodologies and were biased. However such views have been challenged (for example Davies, 1999b; Hegarty 1998), with arguments that teacher effectiveness cannot be viewed in isolation and that pupils and teachers are part of and interact with larger social and political systems. Furthermore within this context the scientific, experimental and positivistic tradition



may provide prescriptive solutions, which can be over simplistic in highly complex learning interactions. This is not to suggest an absence of rigour within educational research but that it is legitimate to undertake research that does not necessarily provide answers or solutions, but aims to develop knowledge. Rose and Grosvenor (2001) argue for a creative role for educational research, which can

‘involve them (researchers) in unsettling uncertainties, in being troublesome, in challenging the ‘what works’ philosophy and the single vantage point, single-track model of education’. (p.5)

This view is extended by Humphreys and Hyland (2002) who introduce a jazz metaphor to include and illustrate the intuitive and improvisatory elements of teaching performance, in essence to add the ‘affective’ to the ‘effective’. It then is necessary to consider a methodology in educational research that is based within the judgements and experience of everyday practice but goes beyond simple reflection. This could be considered an approach based on the Aristotelian concept of phronesis or practical wisdom, the application of good judgement to human conduct in contrast to theoretical inquiry leading to sophi/a or wisdom generally.

Similarly, there has been and continues to be concern about the artificiality of much quantitative research in psychology. In an attempt to remove any ‘unwanted’ variability when working with subjects, the very uniqueness and individuality that people bring to activities, and more particularly social interaction, is lost. In an attempt to ensure reliability and generalisability, questions are raised about validity and more pertinently value. This focus on researcher control in effect can lead to artificial settings that do not match ‘real world’ activity and may only achieve results, which are artefacts of the researchers’ procedures. Harre (1997) argued that the cause-effect conceptual framework used in the natural science is inappropriate to the analysis of much of human interaction. He argued the need for different conceptual frameworks with consequently different methodologies particularly to address the core feature of human interaction, which is language. The work of a psychologist is to

consider the roles, rules and conventions that govern what people say and do, many of which will be implicit and tacit.

One response to these concerns has been a move towards the use of qualitative methodologies in both educational and psychological research.

“There is no one correct qualitative method, but there is a strong underlying sense that much, perhaps too much, is lost when material is quantified and that we need to base research on different conceptual foundations from those occupied by orthodox (positivist) psychology.” (Parker, 1994 p8) (my addition in brackets)

The selected methodology for this research then reflects its location within educational psychology, and draws on qualitative research approaches from both education and psychology. I wanted to include the variability and complexity of everyday school experience within the research.

## **Researching professional practice.**

The focus of the research is to develop professional practice. It follows in the tradition of Schon (1996) by seeking to develop knowledge by examining and exploring everyday experiences. Schon (1996) argued that the traditional adherence to a restricted scientific methodology was

“ mismatched to the changing character of the situations of practice – the complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflicts which are increasingly perceived as central to the world of professional practice.” (p.14)

He advocated a move away from what he described as the ‘model of technical rationality’ to a model of ‘reflection in action’. A strength of this model is that it endeavours to articulate actions of professionals working in uncertain, complex and changing situations, which Schon (1996) refers to as ‘messes’. In these settings there are no independent problems and the key professional skill is to develop a process

“which names the things to which we will attend and frames the context in which we will attend to them.” (p. 40)

Schon’s views are echoed by a number of practitioners (see for example Billington, 1995; Burden, 1997; Gameson, J., Rhydderch, G. Ellis, D. and Carroll, T., 2003), who reject the dominance of the so-called positivist model and its methods in favour of more interpretive and constructionist models. They recognize that researchers bring their own understanding to a situation, which they need to be aware of, reflect on and give consideration to how their understanding interacts with the understandings of those with whom they are working.

“The interpretivist paradigm represents an interest in how meaning is made, focusing on perspectives and personal and social meanings. It is therefore most suited to inquiry in everyday and complex practice settings where objectifying what is going on is impractical. (Norwich, 1998, p.13)

A qualitative research methodology was then selected as drawing on a social constructionist paradigm, which focuses on the illumination of meanings and perspectives rather than quantification and generalizability.

Furthermore, there was a recognition of the need to select a methodology that allows for and takes account of the institutional and cultural histories, which influence ways of thinking and ways of acting. Edwards (1998) drawing on socio-cultural psychology, suggests that:

‘we have to take seriously constructivist notions of the generation of personal knowledge when considering the relationship between theory and practice. Importantly, the activity theory view of the relationship between knowledge and practice recognises the dialectical tradition of post- Vygotskian research and suggests that forms of thought are directly related to forms of practice. Therefore changes in practice may be essential prerequisites for changes in thought rather than the reverse’. (p. 89).

## **Undertaking practitioner research**

I wanted to examine my own work as a practitioner, in the context within which I practiced and how this practice fostered consultation with pupils. I drew on a practitioner research approach as this term can be described as the type of research in which one's own work as a practitioner and the thinking that informs it are the focus of examination and development. As a practitioner, I sought to develop my own understandings of practice from a fresh vantage point through carrying out a systematic study of consultation with pupils through teaching. Practitioner research is more of a commitment than a set of techniques and is sometimes viewed as less valuable than 'academic' research. These tensions between the worlds of academy and practice have given rise to a series of debates about practitioner research and how it is interpreted in action. Hart (1995b) even writes about authentic practitioner research and describes a set of criteria, which distinguishes it from other forms of research carried out by practitioners. Essentially, in Hart's view, authentic practitioner research is that resulting from practitioners developing questions about their own practice, systematically investigating these questions as part of their practice and interpreting the outcomes in the context of their own practice. He argues for a distinction between practitioner research which draws on 'outside methodologies' (those that come from academic practice) and a practitioner mode of research which builds on the practitioner's own interpretive expertise. In the professional practice of educational psychologists it is hard to maintain this distinction as many would argue the practice of educational psychologists explicitly draws on academic and practice based research, though there would be considerable differences around the nature and form of that research. In undertaking this research I drew on a knowledge base of both educational and psychological research approaches.

Both the strength and weakness of practitioner research is that it is responsive to the complexity and particularity of its own context. A practitioner might find it hard to move beyond the routinely accepted features of everyday professional life and begin to become critically aware of what is usually 'the taken for granted' both conceptually and ideologically.

At the same time this can be a strength as it allows the practitioner the opportunity of developing a different gaze; a new way of seeing in a familiar setting. As a professional, this is a dilemma. How to maintain a professional identity at the same time as becoming 'anthropologically strange' and view your professional world from the outside. There is likely to be a tension between your professional identity and an emerging identity as a practitioner researcher. However most importantly it enables the development of knowledge within particular communities of practice. The focus is research into practice in the context in which those practices occur. In this way, I took a socio-cultural approach

“ In this approach then there is a need to explicate the relations between human action, on the one hand, and the cultural, institutional and historical situations in which this action occurs, on the other”(Wertsch, Del Rio and Alvarez, 1995, p11).

Such analysis can then be directly useful in illuminating that practice (Chaiklin, 1993).

The research was then undertaken within a particular context in an attempt to examine and build a conceptual framework for the professional practice of consulting with pupils.

## **Researching Practice using Action Research.**

Having located my research process within a qualitative methodology with a focus on examining my professional practice, I identified action research as a method, which many would claim, is well suited to the requirements and circumstances of practitioners. It is now a well-established method for educational research (McNiff, 1995) and particular models have been developed for the work of educational psychologists (Burden, 1997, Monsen, Graham, Frederickson and Cameron, 1998). However, Burden (1997) comments that action research

‘still seems to occupy very much a second-class position in the repertoire of most professional psychologists’ (p.13).

Despite its wider acceptance, it has proved difficult to define. Taylor (1994) asserts that the general view of action research is “a way of trying out changes and seeing what happens”.

Carr and Kemmis (1986) define action research as

‘Action research is a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants (teachers, students or principals, for example) in social (including educational) situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of (a) their own social or educational practices, (b) their understanding of these practices, and (c) the situations (and institutions) in which these practices are carried out.’ (cited in McNiff, 1995, p.2)

As a research process it is not the same as ‘reflecting on practice’ but adopts a systematic form of enquiry that is open to public scrutiny.

In order for research to be classified as action research, it would seem that certain elements need to be present in some degree. These are detailed below with reference (in italics) to my research: -

- The focus is on solving practical problems that will contribute to improving the social setting (in other words it is value laden rather than value free).

The overriding practical problem was ‘how can educational psychologists genuinely consult with pupils about their learning and learning environment?’

- It is ‘context-bound’ because the problem is as located and defined by those who experience it.

The problem was located within the practice of educational psychologists who are required and want to act in line with pupils’ expressed views about their learning but feel uneasy about the ways in which pupils are disabled from a real sense of participation.

- It follows a systematic process of collecting, interpreting and making sense of data as changes take place over time.

Work was undertaken with classes of pupils over a period of months to collect and make sense of the pupils’ understanding of learning.

- Participants actively collaborate with and contribute to the research process.

Participants (educational psychologists, pupils and teachers) were given information about the research process before the initial session and were asked for their contributions at each session.

- The knowledge arising from the research will spread by the actions of those involved, by writing, by the positive changes brought about, by the perceived value of the project.

The process of reflection and analysis has informed professional practice and will be written up and disseminated. Discussions with the pupils and teachers involved have taken place.

- In addition, some action research aims to work with participants and systems to enable them to develop a stronger sense of self-determination and self-development

(Elden and Chisholm, 1993)

One aim of this research was to enable pupils to develop their own knowledge and therefore choices about how they supported their own learning.

## **Applying action research to the study**

Drawing on these definitions, an action research method matched the aim of the study of exploring the everyday knowledge of learning that pupils use within the classroom within a collaborative process. Through a planned process of enquiry the research aimed to work with pupils and teachers to consider the ways in which they and others learnt, to experiment with different ways of learning and to examine how this new knowledge was or was not used, particularly in relation to two imminent events, year 6 Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) and transition to Secondary School. It may be suggested that this approach matched that of 'Demystification' (Taylor 1994) in that by working directly with pupils about their own knowledge of learning, this knowledge in itself could act as a catalyst for change.

Using Taylor's (1994) outline

- the research 'question' arises out of the problems of practitioners and it is an important aspect of this approach that the analysis of the situation is in situ. The immediate aim of the research is to understand these problems and the researcher, who may or may not be the actual practitioner, formulates speculative and tentative general principles about the problems that have been identified.

My research question arose following a range of activities focussed on developing pupil empowerment. In particular interactions with pupils, which had suggested a lack of understanding about their own learning and an expectation on their part that teachers would both, manage and deliver 'learning' to them. Teachers, who felt driven by curriculum demands and the need to 'cover' all the content required, echoed this view. Both groups then appeared locked in a teaching and learning experience which worked against self-management and self-determination. As a practitioner who was asked to promote more self directed learning, the problem was then 'In this context, how can I contribute to developing this?'

- from these problems, it was possible to generate ideas about what action might lead to desired improvements.

A possible way forward was to look at the understandings pupils have of their own learning, explore these and thereby encourage them to act as a resource for themselves and others. This was based on the idea that if pupils have a greater insight into their learning processes, then they may draw on this knowledge independently and bring about changes for themselves in the way (and possibly the what) they learn. If this work is undertaken in a familiar setting, alongside regular teaching staff then there is a greater likelihood that any changes brought about by the process will diffuse into the everyday educational experience of the pupils.

- the action can then be tried out and data on its impact collected, and the data can then be used to revise the earlier ideas.

A series of teaching inputs about learning were then planned and delivered within a cycle of ongoing reflection and review. The process involved continual consultation with the pupils

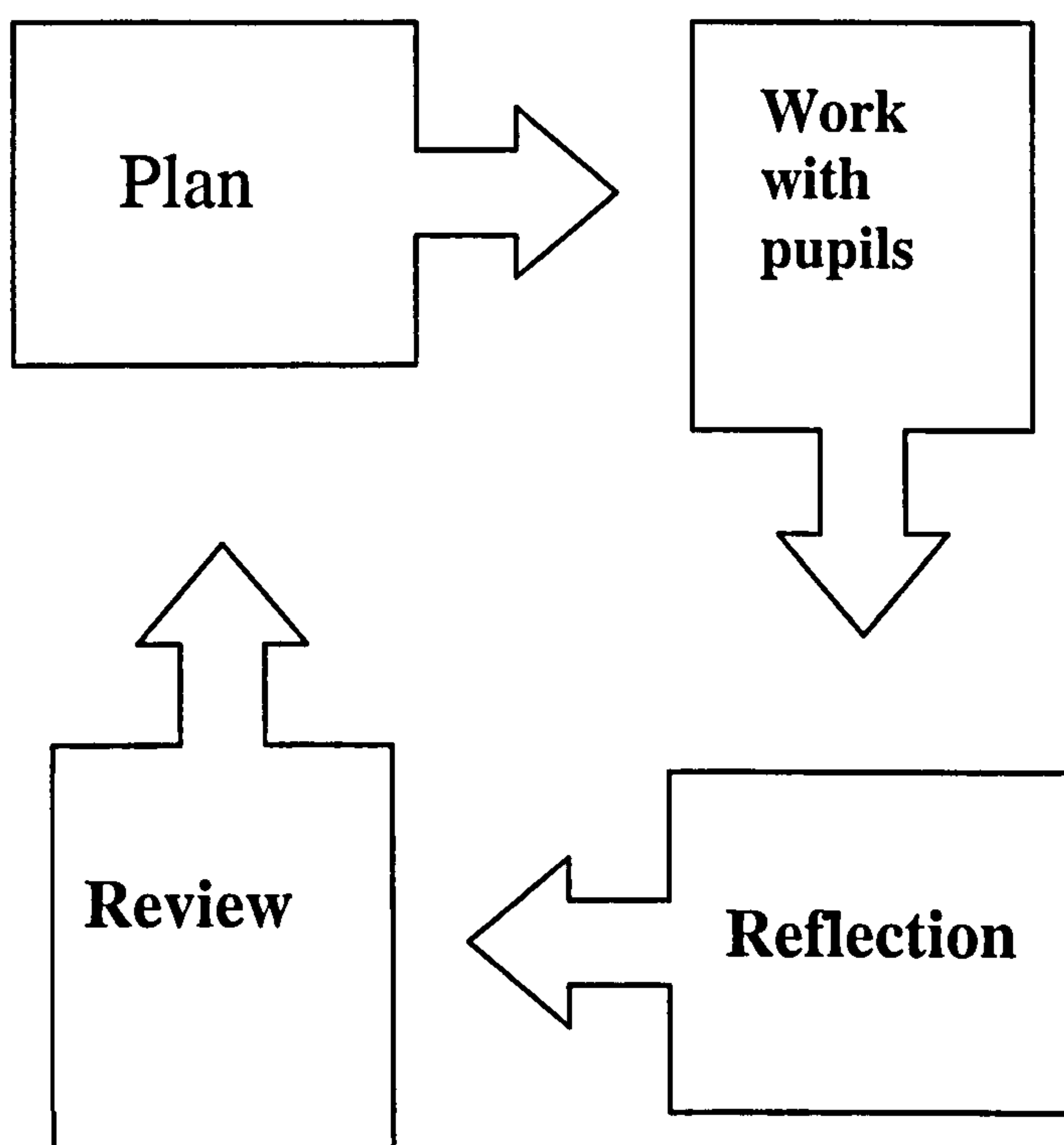


about their views and understanding of the teaching input and the information that was introduced about ways of learning.

## The model of action research

The model of action research employed follows that of Kemmis (1981). Although limitations with Kemmis's model have been highlighted (McNiff, 1995; Atkinson, 1994), especially in its apparent failure to address the messy and complex nature of real life research, it does provide a clear 'procedural guide'. It is clear that the progress of the research does involve 'return to go' (Ebbutt, 1985) and 'spin-off' spirals (McNiff, 1988) and minicycles and parallel rather than linear: observe, plan, act review (Atkinson, 1994), however the process remains, sometimes within frighteningly short time frames, as plan-do-review (See Figure 3.1 below). I find this outline helpful in providing a framework for the research, whilst acknowledging the inherent tensions and complexity.

**Figure 3.1: Plan – Do – Review Cycle.**



I wanted to consult with pupils about what they knew about the ways in which they learnt. I wanted to offer different ways of learning to try and find out how they might then use this knowledge to support future learning and actions. The notion behind this idea was that pupils are often viewed as recipients rather than partners in the learning process. Teachers introduce different approaches to support pupils' learning, but by making these explicit to pupils, then pupils might be able to experiment for themselves to find out what approaches might work for them and when.

In effect they could research their own learning. From this base they could then begin to manage their own learning, apply it to new situations and perhaps even ask for parts of the curriculum to be delivered in a way that worked best for them. I had a particular question that arose from my knowledge of work in schools. "Where does the experience, views and understanding of the pupil fit into the learning process?"

I was particularly interested in this question following on from a period of work looking at how educational psychologists consult with pupils such that the pupils might feel more able to actively contribute to planning and supporting their own learning.

## **Psychology in the research context**

The sessions, I planned to undertake, were designed to introduce a range of tools and approaches to the pupils to support their learning. The selection for both the content and the process of the sessions was based on two key considerations: the psychology on which I was drawing and the context in which I was working.

The psychology, I was employing, derives from a constructivist understanding of learning, most specifically that of Vygotsky. He suggested that our understanding of the world is based on our activity within it, which gradually through social mediation, most particularly language, becomes internalised as our way of 'making sense'. In other words we create a 'mental model' that becomes our reality. Wood (1998) suggested that these models are often evidenced in the metaphors we routinely use to explain our reasoning, for example, we talk of

**'seeing the light', 'putting in the final piece'. I then identified approaches to learning that aimed to highlight for the pupils, ways in which they act upon the world to develop their own 'mental models' and to help them reflect on which might be most effective for them. What I wanted to do was to help pupils identify their own tools for mediating their own learning.**

**'Tools serve as mediational means, i.e. they-metaphorically speaking-stand between the individual and the world' (Saljo, 1998). I then organised these approaches loosely around three of the key ways we act upon the world; seeing, hearing and doing. In this way the first three sessions focussed on visual, auditory and kinaesthetic approaches.**

**Taking account of the context in which I was working, I wanted to**

- provide information about learning that was accessible to pupils;**
- provide tools and techniques that could be pupil directed and which did not rely on teacher or adult support;**
- link with current approaches that were being thought about or introduced into the schools, in particular approaches from 'accelerated learning' and brain gym' which were widely available on local training courses;**
- include frequent opportunity for group work mindful of the body of evidence that shows that encouraging children to work collaboratively can help them to develop their skills and understanding (Wood and O'Malley 1996);**
- include consideration of the emotional aspects of learning to introduce the opportunity both to discuss feelings and acknowledge the possible heightened emotions associated with assessment and change of school. In this way I wanted to emphasise the link between the ways we feel and the way we learn.**

**I also wanted to organise sessions that were practical and useful within the professional practice of educational psychologists. As 'an outsider' I would not be directly involved in planning the content or delivery of the curriculum. What I could do is introduce ideas to the teachers that they might independently take forward into their own teaching practice. In the same way, I might be able to take these sessions into other settings working, with other pupils**

but using the same framework. (Detailed information about the sessions is outlined in appendix 4)

## **Setting Up the Research**

### **Reconnaissance**

Schools are busy places where time is increasingly pressured and often focussed on achieving key outcomes. If the research was to be seen as manageable by the schools and possibly supportive, it needed to fit with ongoing demands and to some extent school priorities. The research process also needed to minimise disruption to classroom life and have the greatest chance of moving into everyday school and curriculum experience. As educational psychologists, work had previously been undertaken to support transition planning between primary and secondary school. This work had been valued and provided an opportunity for further input. Consideration was given to a research outline that focussed on consulting with pupils about their learning as they moved from primary to secondary school. The research could then build on work already developed around transition and could provide pupils and teachers with further information about learning which would support or enhance year 6 outcomes and learning into the new secondary school setting.

As the research work would be with pupils who were moving from primary school to secondary school, it was important to identify a number of primary schools that predominantly fed one secondary school. This would provide opportunities to support transition planning and undertake follow up work with both pupils and teaching staff. Within the Local Education Authority where I worked, this was only the case for one school pyramid. The link educational psychologist for this pyramid was a colleague with whom previous work on pupil empowerment and pupil learning had been undertaken, and therefore was familiar both with the schools and with the research area. A number of primary schools within the pyramid had expressed interest in working alongside educational psychologists to look more

closely at their pupils' learning. Some of these schools were actively involved in other initiatives (for example, Gifted and Talented Programme, De Bono 'thinking hats' approaches) or were in a time of change (for example in an interregnum between heads), so three schools were approached out of a possible 8, and all 3 agreed.

The schools all serve a generally affluent catchment area, though there are some parts experiencing economic and social difficulty. The area is overwhelmingly white in intake. All the schools achieve above average results nationally, and one has Beacon Status. School A and School B are 1.5 form entry and School C is a 1 form entry school. Within the year 6 classes there were 2 pupils in total with statements of special educational needs and a small number of other pupils experiencing educational difficulties.

## **The research plan**

### **The initial plan**

2 educational psychologists (myself and a colleague) would work with a target group of Year 6 pupils in 3 Primary Schools that were part of a pyramid feeding one secondary school

The work would consist of:

- A series of 3 sessions with one year 6 class (size between 20-35) in each primary school to consider pupils' understanding of their own learning and introduce a range of approaches to learning during the Spring Term
- 1 further session with each of year 6 classes in the primary schools to review pupils' own plans and outcomes, and in particular in relation to SATs and transition, towards the end of the summer term
- 1 session with groups of pupils in year 7, who had been part of the year 6 programme, to consider what understandings might have developed since joining secondary school.

(see appendix 1: proposal)

We planned to work with one year 6 class group, in each school. 2 of the primary schools (A and B) had 2 parallel year 6 classes of approximately 26 pupils in each class and one primary school (C) had a single year 6 class of 35 pupils. We agreed to work with one of the 2 classes in Schools A and B and with the whole class in School C. We asked for the support of class teachers and any other staff during our sessions. This was

- in recognition that we are educational psychologists rather than practising teachers;
- so that we could receive feedback on the session;
- to make the teaching process and content as transparent as possible;
- and in the hope that the class teacher might work through our sessions with the parallel class in Schools A and B.

We agreed to work with each of the identified classes for 3 sessions in the Spring Term. This was well ahead of any work specifically focused on SATs, but also at a time of year when pupils were likely to be thinking about change to secondary school, as their school choice would be confirmed during this term. A series of dates was agreed with each school such that we undertook a rolling programme of sessions over a single day, covering all 3 schools, 2 in the morning and one in the afternoon. The order was consistent for all 3 sessions for logistic and geographical reasons. Schools and pupils quite reasonably found it easier to plan if you agreed to come in for the same lesson period each time!

These sessions were to be followed up with a session for each class towards the end of the summer term. This was after SATs and prior to transition to secondary school.

Then there would be focus group sessions with pupil volunteers from each of the Primary Schools following transfer to Secondary School. The number of focus groups would depend on the number of pupil volunteers.

We also planned to meet with all the staff involved with our sessions following the first 3 sessions in the Spring Term and I would interview the class teachers involved following the final session in the primary schools in the Summer Term.

Following agreement to our proposal, we planned the first 3 sessions (see appendix 4: outline plan). Each session consisted of a number of activities loosely based around the particular focus of auditory, visual or kinaesthetic learning, but also including other activities drawn from a range of learning and thinking skills approaches. Each session ended with a request for each pupil to complete a postcard about 'One thing I have learnt today' which was posted anonymously into a post box. We wrote a letter to each school giving an overview of each session and giving some further information (see appendix 2: letter to schools) and including a letter (see appendix 3: letter to pupils), which we asked to be distributed to pupils.

## **The Plan in practice: The Plan-Do-review cycle**

It was at this point that the planning and the real world began to diverge, and the deceptively simple action research cycle slipped away from Kemmis' (1981) model, and that of McNiff (1995), and moved towards the incomplete cycles of Atkinson (1994).

### **Session 1 in the Spring Term**

On arrival at Primary School A, it transpired that there had been an initial conversation between the head teacher and the class teacher about our proposal, but from the class teacher's perspective she was not sure what we were doing but was expecting us. There was a student teacher currently managing the class, who was having significant difficulties. The letters for the pupils had arrived but had not been distributed so pupils were unsure about what was happening. However we undertook session 1 (See Figure 3.2 below) with one year 6 class and the teachers from both year 6 classes observing, making amendments to the plan as we went along. This reflects Atkinson's (1994) discussion that observe, plan, act and reflect can happen at the same time!

We moved on to Primary School B. Both the staff and pupils were expecting us, but we were also joined by the Head of Lower School from the Secondary school as he had 'heard' about

our planned sessions. 2 class teachers, 2 teaching support assistants and the Head of Lower School from the Secondary School then joined this lesson. We undertook session 1 with one class.

In the afternoon we went to Primary School C where all was ready and worked with the full class group and the class teacher observing (see appendix 4: Outline plan of session 1 for further details).

### **Figure 3.2: Teaching Session 1**

#### **Aims**

- To introduce ourselves and enable the pupils to introduce themselves
- To present the overall aims and an outline of the sessions
- To introduce the notion of auditory, visual and kinaesthetic learning styles with a focus on auditory in this session.

#### **Plan**

- Introductions
- Establishing ground rules
- Outlining the aims of the sessions
- Discussing our letter to the class and ways of remembering information
- Using 'learning to ride a bike' as a way of identifying the range of skills and knowledge involved in learning
- Postcards 'One thing I have learnt today'

## **Reflection**

The arrangements for the sessions had been made directly with the 3 head teachers of the Primary Schools on an individual basis. It was interesting to note the differing patterns of communication within each context. In Primary School A, the discussion had taken place but because the head teacher had not given specific instructions to the class teacher, no further organisation had taken place. This class teacher was highly experienced with over twenty years of teaching, but did not want to take the plan forward independently. In Primary school B, everything was organised with the addition of conversations between the class teachers and the head of lower school from the secondary school. These contacts had taken place because



the class teachers used to work with the head of the lower school when there was a middle school system within the LEA. Primary School C was organised as planned.

The three classes of pupils we worked with engaged in very different ways. This was unexpected as the schools served very similar populations and all were highly successful academically. We speculated on possible reasons for these differences: -

- Our delivery over the day;
- Class/class teacher interaction;
- School ethos;
- Differences between previous First School and Middle School teachers;
- Gender balance – male teachers at School B and female teachers at Schools A and C;
- Teaching style- class teacher in School A appeared very controlling, class teachers in School B put on much more of a ‘show’ and class teacher in primary school C was very quiet and calm.

We came to no conclusions about this.

The planning of the content and delivery of the session had worked reasonably effectively in all 3 sessions. We had modified ‘on the hoof’ for Primary School A as the pupils had not received the letter however the other 2 sessions fell into the original planning

We reviewed our experience, the notes we had taken and the direct feedback from the pupils by way of their postcards, and teachers from their comments.

## **Session 2 in the Spring Term**

### **Re-plan**

We re-planned for session 2 (See Figure 3.3 below) deciding that we had exhausted the ‘how you learnt to ride a bike’ activity and that we needed to introduce mind mapping with a different content. We had noticed the evidence of ‘Harry Potter’ books in the classes and were

aware that all the class would have a knowledge base for the story. We therefore decided to use this story as a 'vehicle' for our activities.

### **Figure 3.3: Teaching Session 2**

#### **Aims**

- To introduce and practice mind mapping
- To focus on visual learning styles

#### **Plan**

- Introduce and demonstrate mind mapping using material from 'Harry Potter' stories
- Revisit 'things that help us to learn' using words and material produced from the 'learning to ride a bike' activity.
- Introduce visual learning techniques
- Postcards 'One thing I have learnt today'

## **Action**

We delivered the re-planned session 2 (see appendix 4: Outline plan of session 2 for further details) in all 3 Primary Schools. These ran as before, but with the following changes

- Only the main class teacher observed in primary School A;
- The Head of Lower School did not join any of the sessions;
- The class teacher for the year 6 class we were not working with directly in Primary School B had delivered our session 1 to his class in the intervening period.

## **Reflection**

The sessions continued to be 'very different' in each class and once again we found ourselves responding intuitively and pragmatically to the context. The pupils in School A needed lots of encouragement to engage in direct contrast to the pupils in School B who were constantly 'on the go' and challenged us. Pupils in School C responded with enthusiasm for everything and simply wanted to 'have a go'.

## Session 3 in the Spring Term

### Re-plan

We amended session 3 again in response to the experience of session 2 (See Figure 3.4 below) and from the feedback received from the pupils and our notes. We had removed the 'learning to ride a bike' content, but re-introduced words about learning from the previous sessions.

#### Figure 3.4: Teaching Session 3

##### Aims

- To apply learning from sessions 1 and 2 to prepare for things that are going to happen between now and the end of year 6 (including SATs and transition)
- To focus on kinaesthetic learning
- To review the 3 sessions and outline the plan for the session in the Summer Term

##### Plan

- Introduction to kinaesthetic learning
- Words about things that are going to happen over the rest of the year
- Collate and make class mind maps
- Relaxation
- Individual mind mapping about planning for the rest of the year.
- Review in preparation for session in the Summer term
- Postcards 'One thing I have learnt today'

### Action

We delivered session 3 to each group (see appendix 4: outline plan of session 3 for further details). This ran as for session 2. At the end of this session we explained to the pupils that we would be returning in June following their SATs to ask them if they had been able or had wanted to use any of the techniques/information from the lessons for their SATs work or for any other activities and we would be talking some more about transfer to Secondary School.

## **Reflection**

Teacher/researcher is a difficult role to maintain, and we were not the pupils' class teacher. The pupils clearly knew we were educational psychologists and were not currently teachers, and they saw our lessons as 'different'. For some this was good, for others this was not getting on with real work. We were also learning skills as we went, particularly in relation to building a relationship with 3 very different class groups and in revisiting our very rusty teaching skills. Neither of us had taught year 6 pupils before. It was very enjoyable, demanding at times, and rewarding.

## **Data Collection**

Following each of the three sessions data was collected from a number of sources. The teaching sessions were not recorded, however we took notes of the activities and conversations within the sessions and reviewed these following each session. This formed a key part of the action research process. At the end of each session there was the evaluative postcards completed by each pupil, which also informed our review and future planning. Each session provided documentation from the particular activities undertaken which included pupil's individual work, for example a mind map, group work, for example a drawing, or a group activity which one of us recorded at the time, for example a brainstorm of words about events in year 6. Pupils were always asked what work they wanted to retain and whether we could photocopy any originals for ourselves.

## **Meeting with the staff involved following the 3 sessions**

### **Plan**

We sent a 'thank you' letter to all the pupils (see appendix 5: Thank you letter). We arranged a meeting with the head teachers, class teachers and other staff who had been involved with

our work over the 3 sessions. The purpose of this meeting was to present and receive feedback (see appendix 6: presentation) and to distribute questionnaires to all the class teachers (see appendix 7: questionnaires to teachers). This was a rather disappointing meeting, as there seemed to be little that the staff wanted to comment on other than to puzzle over the differences between the pupils in the 3 schools.

## Reflection

Was this a rather parallel activity to the main thrust of teaching for year 6? We were very close to the time of taking SATs, which places enormous pressure on both staff and pupils, and within these schools it is essential to achieve exceptionally good results. Was it too difficult to focus on a learning activity? There were also the power differentials within the group. Although there were positive relationships on the surface, there were issues underneath about particular styles of practice and permission to initiate or discuss change.

## Data Collection

Notes of this meeting were taken by both of us and these were collated as a record of the meeting.

## Session 4 in the summer term

### Plan

The next step was to organise session 4 in June. We planned the session (See Figure 3.5 p.75). Dates were agreed with all 3 schools in the early part of the term and an email was sent to each school to distribute to pupils. (see appendix 8: Email to pupils and appendix 9: Outline plan of session 4 for further details).

### Figure 3.5: Teaching Session

#### Aims

- To review learning from the previous sessions
- To consider the usefulness of the sessions
- To prepare for transition into secondary school

#### Plan

- Review of previous sessions
- Rating of usefulness
- Preparation for transition
- Saying goodbye
- Post cards 'One thing you would like to tell us or ask us'

## Action

Primary School C couldn't make the original date; they had succeeded into getting into the local rugby final, which fell on that day so the date was changed. This meant we delivered to this class group first for the first time. All went as planned at School A, however on arrival at School B, we were asked if we could work with both classes together as there was no other time in the school year when the second class teacher could deliver the parallel session. So rather than teach 40 plus pupils at one time, we each taught one class with the class teacher observing. With the second class teacher, I taught the 'other' year 6 group, whom I had never met before and undertook the session based on planning from the previous sessions.

## Reflection

This matched the likely continual changes to planning arising in any action research process.

We did wonder if School B wanted to see if we could manage a group of 40, but that is probably unfair. Once again I was observing, planning acting and reflecting at the same time!

Although we had changed our 'running order' the response from the class groups in the 3 primary schools was the same. We began to conclude that each class had a particular dynamic unrelated to us, though very interestingly the other year 6 group in BR was quiet, thoughtful and attentive!

## **Completing the work in the primary schools**

We sent thank you letters to all the primary Schools (see appendix 10: Thank you letter).

We needed to let the Secondary School know about our follow up plans. The Head of Lower School was already aware of these through direct contact and the informal discussions he had had with his previous colleagues. We sent on information to him that the pupils in the classes wanted to be passed on and arranged a date for meeting with the pupils following their transfer to secondary school. This was booked into our diaries. (see appendix 11: letter to Mr X and reply)

I also met with all the class teachers from the 3 primary schools at a later date. Individually for schools A and C and with both teachers together for School B (see appendix 12: Questions for year 6 teachers).

## **Data Collection**

From this final session in the primary school data was collected from a number of sources.

As before , the teaching sessions were not recorded, however we took notes of the activities and conversations within the sessions and reviewed these following the session. This formed a key part of the action research process. At the end of this session there was the evaluative postcards completed by each pupil, and a final postcard comment from them about their overall view of the sessions. There was documentation from the particular activities undertaken which included pupil's individual work, for example a mind map, group work, for example a drawing, and group activities which we recorded at the time, for example a brainstorm of words about events to support transition. Pupils were always asked what work they wanted to retain and whether we could photocopy any originals for ourselves.

## **Sessions in the secondary school using Focus Groups**

I had decided to use a focus group approach to talk to pupils after their move into secondary school. Focus groups are a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. It is an increasingly well-known method for collecting qualitative data (Morgan, 1997). There is a recent and significant strand among feminist researchers that the focus group method can be a very appropriate way of doing feminist research, because of the empowering possibilities. From this perspective, focus groups were seen as compatible with the ideals and principles of participatory research (Status of Women, 2003). This method seemed then to ally with my attempts at genuine consultation with pupils. The approach most closely matched the usual classroom experience of the pupils and pupils could provide support for one another within the discussion (Wilkinson, 1998). It was also a useful and effective way of gathering information from a number of pupils in a short space of time. The key advantage focus groups provide is the opportunity for interaction. I was aware that focus groups explore collective rather than individual experiences, however the focus of my research was on the shared construction and experience of learning in school. This seemed particularly important for pupils who might feel less comfortable in single or small group interview situations and might offer more comment in response to their peers. I was aware of the unequal power relationship within the focus group as I initiated the procedure, and set the agenda, however I hoped that asking for volunteers and providing information about the areas for discussion would dissipate some of this power. It may be that individuals are unlikely to produce contradictory or differing comments within a group, however the experience of working with the classes in year 6 had not suggested this would be problematic. On the other hand as the focus groups was on a voluntary basis it might have represented a particular interest group. It still remained important to give as much control as possible to the pupils themselves and be mindful of those who no longer wanted to take part.



## The focus group sessions

### *Plan*

In September the contact began about organising the meetings with the groups of now year 7 pupils. This was a further case of planning and action following parallel universes. The head of lower school was never available. Contact with the year leader resulted in comments to the effect that she was very busy doing 'MIDYIS' (an assessment process for gathering baseline information on pupils). We eventually offered a date and effectively negotiated with the secretary. We prepared information for the head of lower school, which included a planning timetable for tutors, and letters for pupils and parents (see appendix 13 and 14: letters for pupils and parents). Information was circulated to each tutor group asking pupils to volunteer to talk with us in a focus group and leaving a box on reception for pupils to reply. We received 25 affirmative replies and organised these into groups on the basis of the pupils' previous schools and then organised rooms with the secretary and notes to pupils and tutors. Further pupils joined the groups as their replies came in late.

Alongside this planning the head of year had introduced an individual assessment for all pupils about their learning styles. This had arisen from 2 inputs from ourselves. One was a training session on building self-managing tutor groups and other was our input into the year 6 groups. The head of year had noted that the most effective tutor group in the previous year 7 cohort was the one with the greatest diversity of learning styles. Data about learning styles was collected within tutor groups, however staff were unsure what to do with the information. I was therefore asked to look through the outcomes and make suggestions, which I did (see appendix 15: suggestions to Mr X).

### *Action*

It did work- pupils came and worked with us in a focus group, despite work outside felling trees. The questions used were as outlined in the original planning (see appendix 16: outline

questions for the focus groups). The full discussion was recorded on a mini disc and then transcribed in full. This procedure was fully explained to the pupils.

### *Reflection*

Planning and undertaking the teaching sessions felt like a series of hares that had been sent off and their whereabouts were unknown. Introducing ideas to the Head of Lower School had begun a process, which did not seem related to any overall planning. Taking up notions about learning styles, identifying questionnaires he had found from someone who had been on a course and then not knowing what to do with the information. The pupils who came wanted to talk about lots of things in their new secondary life. Some of this was to express their feelings about the change, but there was also a suspicion that there was no longer that opportunity for talk. And life in secondary schools works effectively because of the secretary!

And it was all tinged with a sadness because over the sessions we had got to know something of a group of pupils and had enjoyed working with them.

## **Research Material**

Documentation, pupils' work and notes were retained from all the sessions. We also asked all the pupils to anonymously complete a postcard at the end of all the sessions, saying one thing they had learnt in the session and post this into a posting box. The focus group discussions were recorded with the permission of the pupils and subsequently transcribed. (For a full list of research material collected from all the sessions see appendix 17).

Discussion of the method and process of analysis of the research material is considered in Chapter 4.

# Ethical Issues

The focus of this research was very much about enabling pupils to have a greater understanding of learning and be able to choose how to use or ignore that understanding. As such it was important to be as open and transparent as possible with all those involved with the research. Throughout the time we worked both with staff and pupils we attempted to give information directly to all those involved and specifically wrote letters to pupils to inform them of who we were and what we were planning to do. In this way we hoped that the pupils were more able to make informed decisions about how and whether they contributed within the sessions (DoH 2001). We also built in opportunities for pupils to feedback directly to us their thoughts about each session. The final focus group sessions in the secondary school were on a volunteer basis. We sent details of all the session plans to the schools and attempted to make the content and purpose as clear as possible. In this way we hope that we conducted the research in line with the British Psychological Society's 'Guidelines for practice' (2002). However, particularly in relation to the pupils, we were aware of the power differential between adult and child and between pupil and teacher. It would have been difficult for any pupil to opt out of our sessions legitimately, for example by directly requesting not to be there. This indeed is rarely an option for a pupil about any part of school life. Taking an action research approach did enable us to ensure that as much of possible during the research 'stayed the same', that is we worked with whole class groups, within their usual classroom, with their current class teacher present. We fitted into normal lesson times. Pupils who had activities outside the classroom, for example music lessons, additional literacy and so on continued as usual. Any material developed in the sessions was considered to be the pupils' property and we consulted and agreed with them about any work we would like to keep. Pupils were very ready to say what work they wanted, whether work should be photocopied or we could take originals. We made known that this was only for us. Similarly with information for the secondary school, it was clear that the pupils could choose whether

information was or was not passed on, whether it was anonymous or named, and pupils did make different choices.

We hope that the research did encourage children's active participation and that their perspectives, views and feelings were accepted as genuine valid evidence (for further discussion on researching children see Christensen and James, 2000; Harker, 2002). In short we hope the research was carried out with the pupils not on them. Feedback overall would suggest the pupils did enjoy the sessions, but this was not the case for all. One pupil also took the opportunity to signal their loneliness to us 'I have learnt I have got no friends' a message that went directly back to the class teacher (Francis, 1999). Although to a lesser extent the role of the class teacher reflects a power differential and as with general school protocols, the initial negotiation took place with head teachers. Once again it is difficult for teachers to say no, however at a minimum the research provided an opportunity for a 'free period' and at best, as one class teacher offered, it was a an 'inset' session. We did make clear to all concerned that no individual school, staff or pupils names would be attached to any written information.

## **Validity**

As I have adopted a qualitative methodology for my research, the criteria for evaluating the outcomes will relate to its trustworthiness and fruitfulness rather than to the possibility of replication and generalization. In using the term 'trustworthy' and 'fruitfulness', I have drawn on validation techniques described by Potter and Wetherall (1995), Henwood and Pigeon (1995) and Maxwell (1992) as appropriate for qualitative studies.

Validity, in a broad sense, refers to whether the account of the relationship between the research material and what the research was about can be seen to be legitimate. It is always possible for different interpretations to be given to any set of information, therefore how is my

interpretation more trustworthy than another? In seeking to develop confidence in my interpretations I attempted to include in the research: -

- an openness of information to all those who were contributing to the research. In this way, I hoped to avoid as far as possible the division between the researcher and the researched;
- work alongside a colleague so that it was possible to check and reflect on all the research activities;
- retaining and referring to all the material collected throughout the research without preference for particular kinds or sources of data;
- reference back to both pupils and other adults about our understandings of the information passed to us, and working with information given to us directly from pupils and other adults;
- openness in the process of analysis, showing the way in which I arrived at particular interpretations. This process was shared with a colleague to establish that it made sense of the research material;
- an attempt to be explicit about the views that I held and to set these on one side as I reviewed the information from the research;
- work in an area in which I believed I had knowledge and expertise.

‘Fruitfulness’ refers to the usefulness of the research outcomes to provide new solutions or novel explanations. Scheurich (1996) further argues for a ‘subversive conversation on validity’, by which he wants to highlight the voices of difference. In other words to offer a space to those who are often silenced within research. In this sense, the focus in my research aims to seek a different way for pupils to find a voice in the professional practice of educational psychology. It will be ‘fruitful’ if it is seen to have explored alternatives ways of consulting with pupils and to have provided more opportunities for educational psychologists to genuinely access the voice of the pupil.

The following chapter begins the process of analysis which looks to examine the outcomes of professional consultation with pupils through teaching as one alternative approach and chapter 5 considers its usefulness in accessing the pupil voice.

# CHAPTER 4

## ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH MATERIAL

### The Process of Analysis

The process of analysis essentially falls into stages. The first stage seeks to analyse all the research material arising from the direct work with the pupils. This analysis attempts to illuminate the pupils' own understandings of learning and their learning environment in relation to the research questions: -

- what understandings of learning would pupils have as they move from primary school (year 6) to secondary school (year 7)?
- how might these understandings develop when introducing year 6 and then year 7 classes to psychology about different ways of learning?
- how might pupils use their knowledge of different ways of learning and of themselves as learners to support their transition from primary to secondary school?

The second stage is then to consider the information arising from this analysis as a basis for addressing the main research question

- Is teaching a way of professionally consulting with pupils?

In other words has the selected teaching process provided a forum in which the pupils' experiences can be voiced and heard and has this then enabled a genuine professional consultation with those pupils?

The first stage of the analysis is presented in this chapter and the second stage is substantially addressed in the following chapter 5 'Discussion'.

# Deciding the Method of Analysis

The research I undertook with the pupils created a considerable amount of research information. This presented a challenge in terms of devising a manageable way of analysing this information. Moreover, in deciding on a method of analysis for this information, I needed to take account of a number of key features underpinning the research:

- A key aspect of the research was to explore a different way of undertaking professional practice as an educational psychologist. Any analysis of the information had to include reflection on the process of being a professional and include the understanding and skills I brought and re-brought to the research. In other words the method of analysis needed to be reflexive.
- The research process had attempted to be as explicit as possible with the pupils and enable their active involvement as co-researchers in the process of finding out about their own learning. Their understandings and constructions of the sessions then form the essential part of the analysis. I was not primarily interested in discovering, for example, their attitude towards learning (what they liked or disliked), or school change (whether they were looking forward to change or not), though this emerged; what I wanted to find out about was the way they *understood* learning, and *their experience of* school change. What I was trying to illuminate were the ways in which the pupils constructed and co-constructed their experience of school; how their understanding is constituted in and through discourse (Wood and Kroger, 2000).
- Although the intent was to work alongside pupils and teachers, there was also the recognition of power held by adults within schools, particularly those occupying a 'teacher' role if only on a temporary basis. The latter point is interesting in that both pupils and teachers recognized that I was performing as a teacher but was not a teacher. The relationship between the class teacher and me as a psychologist was also one of



professional power, not by intention but by convention. Analysis then needed to be able to directly focus on the power of relationships within the interactions.

- The method of analysis needed to be congruent with the 'real world' research that had taken place within the usual organisation of everyday life in a school and as such was 'messy' and did not easily fit into one form of analysis.
- Much of the research information had been developed within a classroom, using typical classroom practices of talk, and written and graphical recording. As such the selected method of analysis needed to be able to deal with and more importantly illuminate a range of discourse.

The major focus of my analysis was on the research material arising directly from the pupils. My interest was in what the pupils had reported and recorded about learning and their experience of transition; in effect, how I could enable them to give voice to their views through teaching.

In deciding on an appropriate method of analysis, I was aware that I would foreground my own interpretations of the collected discourse and I therefore needed to provide as direct access as possible to the material from which my interpretations were derived and I needed to look for contra indicators to any interpretation I set out. I adopted a staged process of analysis, which followed guidelines suggested by Foster and Parker (1995) and also drew on Potter and Weatherall (1987). This staged approach allowed me to look in increasing depth and detail at the collected data and to specifically focus at each stage on any contradictory or discluded information which might challenge or change my interpretations. The process as described draws on the methods of discursive analysis and incorporates a critical interrogation of my own presuppositions. However as Wood and Kroger (2000) note the process is much more messy and open to continual revision than might be suggested by the notion of a series of steps.

I analysed the content by looking for the emergence of common elements within the material. Initially I looked for common elements in each data section separately, as the first section

related to the sessions in the primary school and the second section to sessions in the secondary school. This stage of the process drew on 'grounded theory'. The approach of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) is suitable for use with any form of unstructured material, including documentary evidence, observations and interview transcripts. The analysis is undertaken by close inspection of the material to generate emergent theory. The process typically follows a series of stages, which initially seek to identify 'low level' categories that describe relevant features of the material and provide a 'close fit' to the collected material. There is then a search for linkages between these categories at an increasing level of abstraction. Constant comparisons are undertaken between identified instances or cases to fully explore the complexity of the material and to take account of alternative or different examples. In this way it is possible to present a 'thick description', which may begin to demonstrate an emergent theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The use of the term 'grounded' reflects the approach that theory 'emerges' from the material. This position has been challenged, as it is not possible for the researcher to approach material as a 'tabula rasa'. Charmaz (1990), in response, advocates a constructivist approach where researchers make their perspective(s) transparent but do not seek to merely apply it to new material. This is then a delicate balance between looking for confirmatory information and 'keeping an open mind'. However, Henwood and Pigeon (1995) argue that such an approach keeps researchers mindful of the analytical path they are following and makes them wary of simply reproducing pre-existing perceptions. In following this approach I was then attentive to the presuppositions that I brought to the analysis.

## **Collection of Research Material**

The first stage of the process was to draw together the collection of work, notes and interviews undertaken throughout the research. This included records of activities tried out with the 3 classes of year 6 pupils over the four teaching sessions, the recordings of the 3

follow up focus groups discussions, notes from discussions and reviews with class teachers and head teachers and notes from reflections between myself and my colleague. These records all consist of forms of 'talk', either spoken or written, with some of the written text appearing as graphics or illustrations and including abbreviated text such as in text messaging and mind mapping (see appendix 17 for a full list of research materials).

I then organised this material into 2 sections:

1. Written documentation of any kind over all the sessions. This covered:
  - Documentation that was particular to a session, for example a whole class collation of an activity (see appendix 18-24 for examples of materials);
  - Documentation that ran throughout the sessions, for example the individual postcards filled in at the end of each session (see appendix 25 for an example of materials).
2. Recorded talk:
  - 3 focus group interviews with self selected groups from each class of year 6 pupils now year 7 of approximately 1 hour in length which I transcribed. (See appendix 26 for an example).

Section 1 covered material arising from the sessions within the primary school and Section 2 covered the material from the sessions within the secondary school. I analysed these 2 sections separately to consider the similarities and differences as the pupils moved between schools.

There were also:

- Notes and records from discussions with class teachers and head teachers (see appendix 27 for an example);
- Notes and records from professional reflections (see appendix 28 for an example);
- Pupil evaluations of the sessions.

**This material is discussed following the analysis of the research materials arising from the sessions in the primary schools under 'Reflection and review at the end of the sessions in the Primary Schools'.**

## Analysis: Research Material: Section 1 (primary).

The first stage of the analysis was to read through all the research material to begin to identify and allocate initial 'low level' codes. The following is an example of these initial codings (See Figure 4.1 below) when reading through a set of responses to 'One thing I have learnt to-day is...'.

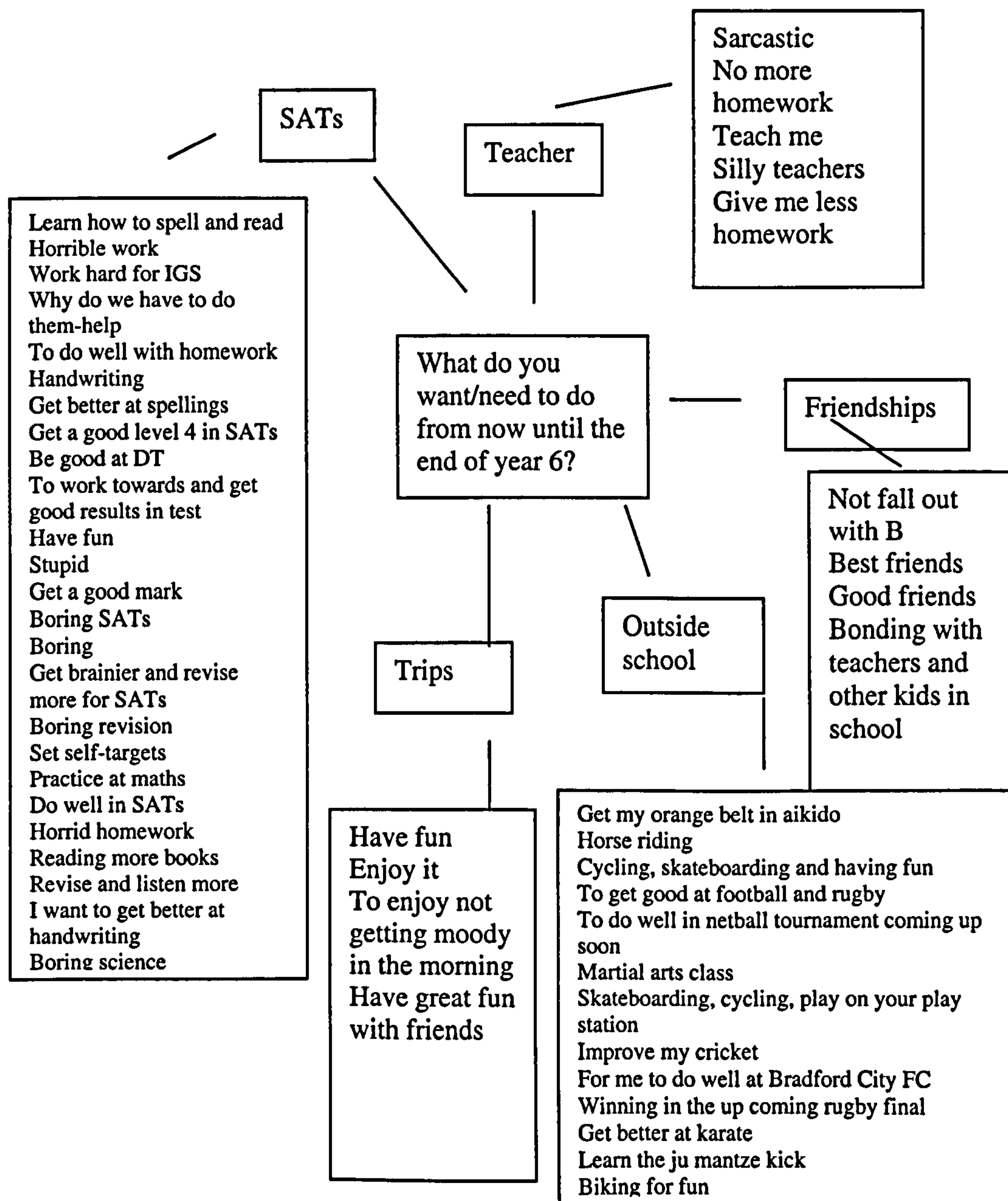
**Figure 4.1: One thing I have learnt today (from pupils' post cards)**

One thing I have learnt to-day is...	Initial Codes
I learnt how to calm down	Technique
How to do a sequence	Technique
I know how to do my homework in peace because of the thing were we put the paper	Technique
I have learnt how fun mind maps are	Technique/fun in learning
Today I have learnt how to learn in chunks	Feature
I have learnt how fun you can make mindmaps	Technique/fun in learning
That tensing muscles is quite relaxing	Technique
How people can help	Support for learning
What we will do in year 6, mindmap, action	Information/technique
How to remember something	Feature
That different people have different ways of learning	Changing understanding of learning
How exercises can relax you	Feature/technique
Today I have learnt the mind map	Technique
How to relax, How people can help	Technique/support
I have learnt how friends can help me learn	Support/importance of friendship
I learned that Laurey likes beer and curry	Information
Today I learnt that signalling to talk to someone is harder than it looks	Construct of learning
That I am not very good at remembering	Feature/understanding of own learning
Mind map	Technique
I've learnt how to do consequences	Information
I learnt Benjamin has a motor bike	Information
I have learnt how to make better mind maps and about what I am doing this year	Technique/information
One thing I have learnt is what to do when or if I need help [. Thank you	Support for learning/understanding of learning
Sequences	Feature
Sequences: make my own mind map	Feature/technique
To draw mind maps again and that you can only remember 7 things	Technique/feature
I learnt that different people learn in all sorts of different ways and chunking -sequences.	understanding of learning/feature
I have learnt today what people can do to help me learn	Feature
Put sequences in chunks 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 1	Support for learning
	Feature

*For a description of the codes see appendix 29*

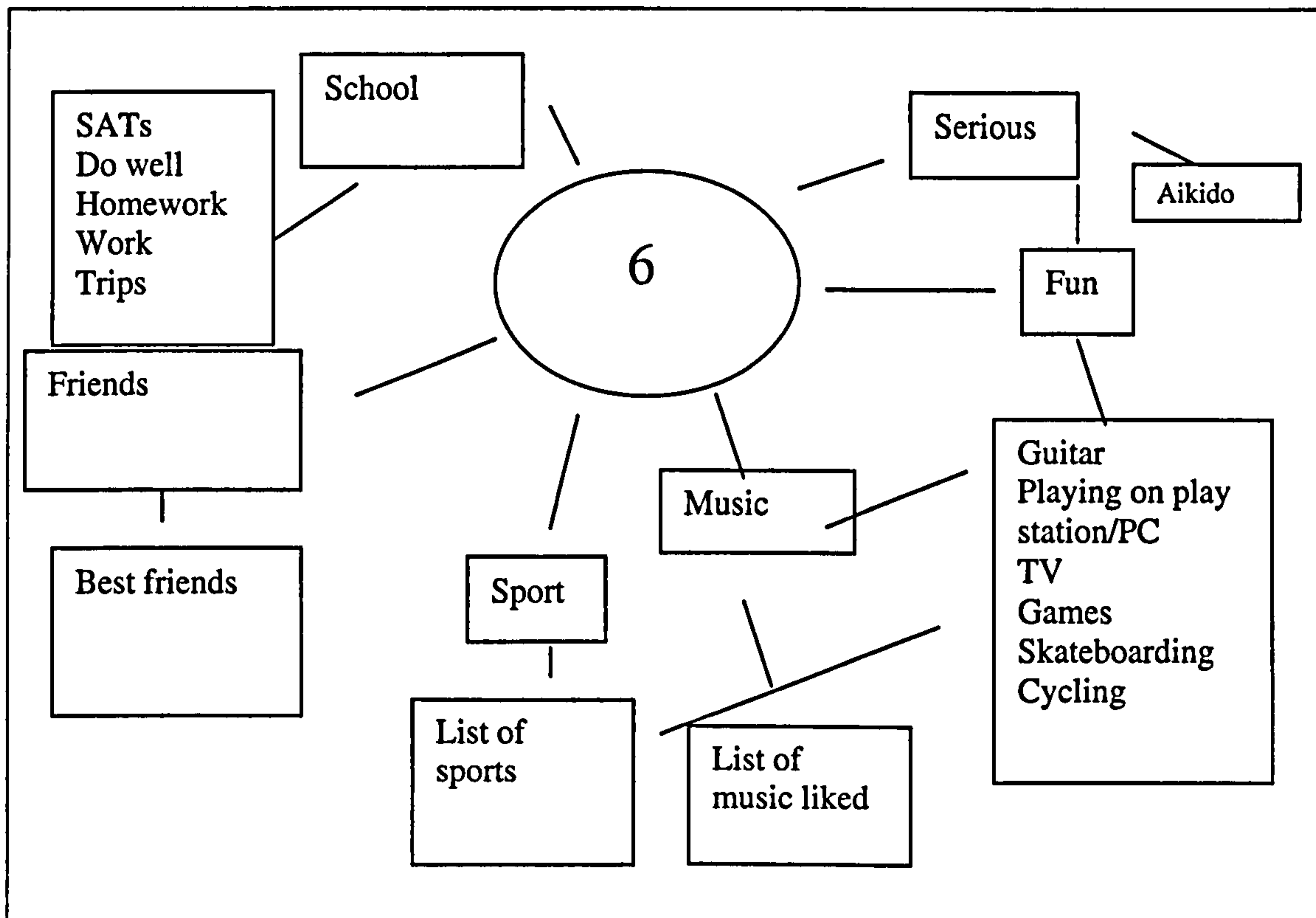
In the sessions with the pupils in the primary schools, the pupils themselves often undertook this initial 'low level' coding. This happened when there was a discussion around a question followed by an activity, the outcomes of which were recorded by a whole class. For example when considering, in session 3, what they might want to do by the end of the year, a group activity identified what tasks they might want to undertake, then they organised these group suggestions on to a whole class mind map. One example of this initial coding is reproduced in Figure 4.2 below, where the initial codes are: -Teachers; SATs; Friendships; Outside School; Trips

**Figure 4.2: Whole Class Mind Map: Session 3**



Following the whole class mind map, the pupils went on to complete an individual mind map for themselves. An example of one is set out in Figure 4.3 below, which included initial codes of: - School; Serious; Fun; Friends; Music; Sport

**Figure 4.3: Individual Mind Map**



The pupil had drawn on the original whole class codings and then developed these further.

It was in this way that the pupils began to research for themselves their own understandings of learning and their experience of school and there was a beginning of a co-construction of learning between the process of the sessions and pupils' ongoing experience of learning.

By examining my initial codings from the examples given above from 'One thing I have learnt to-day' (pupils' post cards) and drawing on the initial coding given by the pupils in both mind maps, I went on to identify the following significant concepts (See Figure 4.4 below): -

**Figure 4.4: Initial significant concepts**

<b>Initial Significant Concepts</b>	<b>Description</b>
Importance of friendship	Comments about maintaining friendships, having best friends, good friends
Fun outside school	List of pleasurable activities happening away from school
Teacher demand	Activities directed by the teacher and expectations that the teacher would provide information
Focus on outcomes	Need to do well in Sats, complete homework, get good marks
Boredom with work related to SATs	Boring, revision,
Criticism of teachers	Silly, sarcastic
Techniques	Range of tools to use
Features	Different aspects of learning, for example memory
Active v passive	Learning referred to as enjoyment and finding out in contrast to taking in information
Understanding of the learning process	Ways in which learning changes for oneself and can be different
Support for learning	What helps

I then selected each significant concept and re-read the remaining research material to identify any further examples of data that would ‘fit’ with these significant concepts. For example, working on more data, I built up the following examples of the concept ‘Fun outside school’

**Figure 4.5: Fun outside school**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Content</b>
whole class mind map saying goodbye	Make the holidays real fun Have a week of bowling and doing stuff like that Extended playtimes Fireworks
saying hello	Very special trip Have a welcoming disco School trip to London Eye More games and clubs Have a welcome party

From this process reading through all the research material listed in Section 1, I identified and elaborated on the initial significant concepts to develop initial categories. For example the initial concept ‘Fun outside School’ appeared to represent a close fit to further coding across a



range of data however 'Support for learning' divided into a number of further groupings which differentiated between the kind of support different people or contexts could provide. I considered these initial categories in relation to the research questions, and from this grouped the initial categories into broader initial conceptual categories to address these research questions. These initial conceptual categories are discussed below.

## **What Might be the Pupils' Understandings of Learning? (Primary sessions)**

### **'What is learning'?**

There were 3 initial categories associated with this conceptual category:

- What is involved in learning;
- Schoolwork;
- Fun.

### **What is involved in learning?**

Learning was seen as an active process, and was largely related to practical rather than academic experience. Learning takes place bit by bit, making mistakes along the way. There is a range of emotions involved in learning which are both positive and negative. There is the pleasure of becoming more successful, but also the frustration of failing. However the motivation to succeed is the driver, with the outcomes a generally intrinsic reward "I was the first in the family" or being able to do what others can do; being able to join in with your family, your friends and others. Confidence is part of learning; a belief that you can do this, but also a recognition that the time and context have to be right. Learning is supported by both self improvement and encouragement of others. You need to listen to others, so they can talk you through the task, show you what to do, give you instructions, give you warnings, and provide help.

## Schoolwork

In contrast schoolwork was characterized by putting in effort to work harder, do better “get better at spellings”, and improve in achievements. The emphasis was to know more and to show that you knew more. Alongside this focus on outcomes was a feeling of pressure. This was crystallized in SATs, which were seen as boring but important “do well in SATs”, “Pass SATs exams”. You have to work hard and aim for the best levels you can. SATS clearly generate a great deal of anxiety although this comes across in trying not to worry “don’t worry”, “do my best”, “butterflies”. The domination of SATs is evident throughout this as a considerable burden.

## Fun

There is a notable separation between school and fun. The lighter side of life seems to be outside school apart from school trips, which are something to look forward to and the ever-present homework, which invades home life “do night you get it”. Fun seems to reside in a host of outside activities including sports, drama, films, horse riding, play stations and so on.

## What might help learning?

There were a number of clusters within this category, some with further elements:

- What can pupils do for themselves?
- What can others do to help?
  - Friends;
  - Teachers;
  - Parents/carers.
- What impact does the context have on learning?
  - Class;
  - School;

- Forthcoming school change.

## What can pupils do for themselves?

The overriding tone was of adult talk, which highlighted listening, concentrating and working harder “I can try to listen and not talk to friends”. Learning is very much about ‘taking in’ from others. Even the more active suggestions involve trying to become clearer about what you have been told, so it is about asking questions if you don’t understand “I can ask if I don’t know what to do” and then getting better by practice and revision “I can practice things over and over again”. There was some reference to learning by doing things, thinking about learning and how it might work best for you, but there seemed to be the strongest relationship between this approach to learning and ‘schoolwork’.

## What can others do to help?

### *What can friends do to help?*

This seemed an area of intimacy and supportive learning relationships “My friends can be nice and encouraging to help”. Friends offered emotional support by being kind, offering encouragement, praising you and having confidence in you. They also offered help with work by modelling, explaining it better, discussing “help me work things out”, testing “give me a spelling to learn every day”, and working together and showing how they had learnt something “explain to me what they think”. There was also the disruptive side of friendship, which was talking to you, which interfered with learning “do not talk to me”. But at the head of all this is, friends who seem to provide a network of support “be supportive of others when they are trying to improve”

### *What can the teacher do to help pupils learn?*

The focus from comments about the teacher was around individualised approaches. A wish that the teacher would tailor their input to your specific needs “Show me different ways of doing things”. So explaining things in a different way if you didn’t understand, knowing about the way you learn best and responding to this “When I’m stuck they can come and talk me through it again”. Giving examples of work that was successful and talking through how you could improve. Talking to you separately from the whole class “if I need help with anything she can come and talk to me separately”. Teachers could also provide extra input. They needed to encourage and be understanding, but this was very much about recognising individuality.

However this was not the way teachers necessarily related to pupils. Teachers are people you should try and get on the right side of “try and get along with all of them”.

### *What can people at home do to help learning?*

Without doubt the largest focus here was help with homework “they can help with my homework when I get stuck and encourage me”. This ranged from helping by explaining, talking things through, to testing “they can help you revise for tests” and ensuring that the homework was completed “stop me from watching telly”. In some cases this was nagging “make me do my homework” and in others not nagging all the time “keep off my back and stop nagging me”. Beyond homework there was providing support and encouragement and opportunity to do things that school did not do for example going places.

### **What impact does the context have on learning?**

### *What can the class do to help pupils learn?*

The theme here was one of providing a working atmosphere of support, which gave you the confidence to contribute by allowing you to make mistakes or be successful without negative comment “my class can help me by not laughing if I get something wrong”. This seemed to reflect the power of peer relationships. The class as a whole could help learning by explaining, talking things through, and answering questions, giving ideas and evaluating learning “by giving me ideas”. It could also provide an atmosphere for learning by listening to one another and being quiet. “Stop talking when Miss is”, “ be quiet and concentrate”.

### *What can the school do to help pupils learn?*

This largely focussed on organisation, both in terms of overall atmosphere and facilities “new books and equipment to help me learn better”. It seemed that pupils felt the school needed to be supportive both in and outside school. School should be friendly, treat everyone equally and support outside school activities “not be too strict and treat everybody equally”. School should not create anxieties by talking about SATs.

School should provide sufficient and good resources, which were organised effectively.

Pupils should be grouped into the right sets “help me keep in the right English and maths sets”, teachers should be good teachers “if you don’t understand explain it to me properly” and there should be good facilities “get more interesting equipment”. Fun also needs to be part of school “It can teach me by having fun as well as the boring stuff”.

### *Forthcoming school change*

There was a mixture of excitement and worry about the move to the secondary school with comments like “nervous”, “happy”, “be brave”, “learns to stand up to bullies”. Lots of change was identified in terms of new buildings, teachers, subjects, classrooms, and friends, new travel, work demands and tiredness. There was a feeling of insecurity and need for comfort and care, protection, and help if lost. There was a range of fears about punishment- being too

strict, detentions, doing the wrong thing. There were a number of myths around, all of which raised anxiety.

There was recognition of need for more time to settle in to get used to difference and build up relationships, alongside fears about making and losing relationships, wanting the security of a friend and a nice teacher.

Once again, the pupil as an individual was important. The pupils wanted teachers to be aware of their particular strengths and weaknesses, their interests, their relationships.

Pupils wanted to say goodbye. This was generally around having fun- lots of fireworks, parties, playing games and celebrations with leaving services and special food. Alongside a recognition of the need to say thank you and anxiety about leaving and not wanting to leave.

There was an interesting polarisation between those who wanted to mark their entry to school, “have the red carpet treatment” and those that wanted no fuss and not to be patronised, to fade into the background. In the latter group there was a strong expression of wanting to manage the settling in for themselves.

## **How might these Understandings Develop when Introducing Pupils to the Psychology about Different Ways of Learning?**

### **What might have been learnt from the sessions?**

Some pupils learnt nothing or did not find any use for the information. Some knew about learning already, some said it was not “their type of lesson” or the way they learnt or they preferred other lessons. Some pupils had learnt something, but not necessarily used it yet or only very little, but thought it would be useful in the future. Some pupils had learnt a lot and been able to apply it. There is also a strong theme of being helped both with specific activities, for example SATs and in the wider arena of helping to learn.

## Examples of what had been learnt were

- Range of 'techniques', for example brainstorming, mind maps;
- 'Features of learning', for example that it involves remembering and what might help to remember, it involves motivation.
- Learnt that 'settings' effect learning, for example working in groups, working with children other than my friends;
- Redefining their concept of learning.
- Some pupils appeared to be beginning to redefine their concept of learning. They commented on the process of learning rather than the content. There was recognition that there are many different ways to learn "people learn in different ways" and you can choose ways that work for you. "That different people learn in different ways, which ever is best for you". Learning involves some reflection on what you are doing "I've learnt I can use my mind to learn", "New way to learn a problem", "Learnt how to learn other things" and not simply completion of a task "That learning isn't just writing". Learning involves interaction and sharing of ideas "everyone's thought counts", "To listen to other people's ideas" and that learning involves a range of emotions "Learning can be fun if you see it for yourself", and can be used to help yourself "Have learnt how to cope in hard times" and others "Have learnt today what people can do to help me". This seemed to represent a movement from a concrete view of learning, 'vessels to be filled' to a more abstract understanding 'seeds to be nurtured'.

# Reflection and Review at the End of the Sessions in Primary Schools

The process of review informed a number of aspects of the research. It provided an opportunity to seek and analyse the commentaries from both staff and pupils. We could then consider the initial effect of the teaching sessions and link this into the ongoing analysis of the materials collected over the sessions. It also influenced the ways in which we structured the work in the secondary school as conceptual categories became more transparent. These reflections became part of the process of searching for patterns to support theory building. This follows observations from Dey (1999) that categorizations involve making inferences as well as classifications.

I would like to emphasise here that review was an ongoing feature of the research as outlined in the plan do review cycle of action research described in the methodology (Chapter 3). In this sense there was continuous construction and reconstruction of the research process, which equated more with 'spin-off' spirals (McNiff, 1988) and minicycles (Atkinson, 1994) than is apparent in a linear text presentation.

## Pupil evaluation

Interestingly, although the overall evaluation of the sessions was positive, there were two very distinct elements to this evaluation; one related to the 'usefulness of the content' and the other to the 'enjoyment of the process'. In both areas there was a range of views. If the pupil had learnt 'something' and been able to use this information, then the sessions were viewed very positively:

"Because I got really frustrated and remembered a stretch and then relax and it really worked and I felt better".

However, if the pupil had learnt 'nothing' and was not able to use the information, then the response was understandably negative:



“Because I never used the information and I didn’t really learn anything”.

However, some pupils, in enjoying the process, even without any immediate use to them, reported very positively “I enjoyed everything it was good but I won’t use anything apart from the mind maps. Thanx a lot”. And clearly there were some pupils who had strongly disliked all the sessions “Nop! Nop! Nop!”. This latter element seemed to reflect the presence or absence of fun or pleasure in the sessions: a level of emotional engagement that was less evident in the commentary about learning in school generally. There were references to the lessons being “fun” and “cool”. There is perhaps an interesting expectation that ‘fun’ is not often part of learning in school and a further expectation that if you have not learnt ‘something’, no learning has taken place.

(See appendix 25 for evaluative comments at the end of sessions in the primary Schools)

## **Staff evaluation**

### **What might the pupils know about learning?**

Although all teachers saw this as an integral part of their work, they all said the pupils knew very little about their own learning. Two teachers saw it as their responsibility to ‘direct’ learning and two teachers had worked hard at building pupils’ confidence to ask about their own learning, which was largely around, feeling able to say they did not understand or say they wanted to do something differently. They all saw the culture of schools as inimical to discussion about learning. This related to outside pressures in particular, league tables and the strictures of the national curriculum, but also to the ethos of the schools where challenge and risk taking was not encouraged. “There’s no discussion about teaching and learning in staff meetings”.

## What developments might have been brought about?

Teachers found it difficult to identify general changes, but had seen evidence of particular change. One commented that the pupils had used a range of techniques spontaneously in different settings, but most importantly they had begun to reflect on their learning. In general there is “no time to reflect”. For others the work had reinforced what was already being undertaken in the classroom, but it had also given it an extra ‘kudos’ because it was associated with an ‘outside presenter’; the pupils had then engaged more fully. The pupils’ major goal was still that of ‘being able to do the work’.

Discussion about SATs and transition had highlighted the need for preparation and to address the varying levels of anxiety about both these pressures.

## Overall evaluation

Comments from staff were positive. The sessions had fulfilled the stated aims and they all had ideas to take the ideas further, for example by constantly asking ‘what can you do to help you learn’. They saw the need to “spread it” into the rest of the curriculum and embed the approaches or at least approaches about learning into all teaching. The sessions had made teachers aware of need to vary their range of approaches and children too had become aware of this. Teachers said that the pupils enjoyed the sessions.

One teacher in particular was extremely positive, seeing this approach as real partnership and bespoke training. He in fact was teaching the parallel class but delivered the sessions independently to these pupils.

In general, they would want to be more directly involved in planning and delivery, and with respect, they had much more honed teaching skills than ourselves.

(See appendix 12 for example of questions and responses)

# **Professional Reflections across the Sessions in the Primary Schools**

## **What expectations did we have about the pupils understanding of learning?**

We had initially suggested work around learning as a way of exploring consultation because we had been surprised by a series of encounters with pupils where it was clear that their view of learning was 'teachers give us information and we do the work'. This was most clearly encapsulated in the response to work sheets- if you give a pupil a work sheet they need to complete it. In this context we were then expecting that pupils did not routinely reflect on their own learning, nevertheless we were surprised by the general absence of the ability to engage in questioning and activity around thinking and reflection. Being in school was a task that needed to be completed, rather than a place of learning.

## **What developments might have been brought about?**

Learning for the most part was about products not process. There was an engagement in the activities, but a large uncertainty about how this might relate to 'learning'. Pupils could reflect on learning but this did not seem applicable to life in the classroom. However, the pupils engaged in a journey with us and a number responded very enthusiastically about the sessions. They appeared to be under less pressure, more able to express emotions and to have participated in a range of activities with different peers, which had given them different insights into learning and relationships.

## **Contextual influences**

### **The classes**

The 3 class groups worked very differently from each other. We considered what might have brought this about:

- **Class groupings-** two of the groups were half a year group, whereas one was the whole class. The impact of this was that the whole class worked together as a group continuously, whereas the two half class groups regrouped at various times when taking different subjects. A 'teacher in training' who was actually failing had also taught one group; therefore their current experience of school was disjointed and unsatisfactory.
- **Teacher style-** the teaching approach in each class was very different. Experienced teachers taught all the classes, but the style in one was highly directive and controlling of the learning environment, one was more interactive and focussed explicitly on trying things out, and finally one had a very calm and quietly spoken teaching approach. This produced very different class 'presentations'.
- **The class groups in themselves were different.** One group was very reticent and difficult to engage, another boisterous and chatty and ready to disagree and finally one group was excited and enthusiastic. Interestingly we explored visual, auditory and kinaesthetic (VAK) learning by looking at a joke sheet, which both the pupils and ourselves thought to be unlikely distinguishers of learning preferences, but the groupings did match the overall class presentation.

## **Our teaching skills**

We recognised that we have very rusty teaching skills and in fact neither of us have taught year 6 pupils and we did not have a relationship with any of the classes. This was also a strength as we were not bounded by the usual teacher expectations and enabled the sessions to be seen differently by pupils. This was part of building a process of consulting with the pupils.

## **Staff and schools**

Current government and local pressures to demonstrate achievement dominate school agendas. It is hard for them to accommodate 'risk'. However, all the schools and the teachers

did so. Inevitably the sessions were somewhat of a sideshow to general school life, but there was a willingness to consider how a focus on learning might move forward.

## Working with pupils

As always working with pupils is demanding, exhausting and surprising. Trying to both work with a whole class group and enable them to actively contribute to the sessions was difficult, and more or less successful with the different classes and individuals within the classes. Part of this was attempting, over a very short period of time, to build a relationship that was different from that of teacher-pupil, but still needed to be within the usual school boundaries. I think that we did build a different relationship and as such it provided access to views not generally revealed but this access was also limited by the classroom context.

## Analysis: Research Material: Section 2 (secondary).

The next stage of the analysis was to read through the transcripts of the recorded focus group sessions, which had taken place at the beginning of November in the pupils' first term at Secondary School. I began by looking for initial low level codes as with the material from the primary schools and identified the following as initial significant concepts (See Figure 4.6 below and appendix 30 for examples of initial coding): -

**Figure 4.6: Initial significant concepts**

Initial significant concepts	Examples
Friendships	Comments about making and maintaining friendships. "There's a high chance that you won't be with anyone who you were really friends from your old school"
Anxiety	Any expression of worries about people or places in the secondary school. "I like thought it would be like really horrible"
Teachers	Comments about teacher management and presentation in and out of the classroom. "Like-they don't like you really"
Responsibilities	Acknowledged difference between expectations at primary and secondary school. "Treated more like your age"
Schoolwork	Lessons and differences between subjects and content from the primary school. "I think its better here because you've got a much bigger choice"
Homework	Any reference to homework. "I think cos I really dreaded homework"
Transition	Any reference to managing school change. "School did quite a lot to try and make you feel welcome"
Tiredness	Reference to the additional demands of secondary school. "We have it every day on week 'b' so it's really tiring in the second week"
Change brought about by the sessions	Comments on the sessions and their effects "I agree with B, I'd like to do some more now I understand it more"

I became aware that there were relationships between these initial significant concepts and those identified within the primary material. I then began to elaborate the initial categories by comparisons between the initial significant concepts. There was clearly a more developed concept around friendships. However, I was also aware that some initial concepts had faded, for example, fun, and others occupied a much higher profile, for example, anxiety. There were additions to the initial conceptual categories in 'tiredness'.

I was also beginning to jot down notes around hypotheses that I had about these initial conceptual categories. This drew on the process of 'memo-writing', in attempt to identify patterns within the material (Charmaz, 2003). An example would be the conceptual category 'schoolwork' (See Figure 4.7 below).

**Figure 4.7: Example of looking for patterns: Schoolwork**

Schoolwork is about a range of subject-based activities that take place under the direction of a teacher. It centres on amounts of time given to different subjects, both in and out of school, and how this time is used to gain higher marks. Using this time effectively is seen as careful absorption, remembering and repetition of the information that can be externally assessed. As such schoolwork occupies time rather than generally providing interest, though this can be injected by the teacher's presentation on occasions.

In this way I was beginning to identify emerging theories about the pupils understanding of learning, the developments that might have been brought about by our work with them and their experience of transition.

I once again organised the initial categories into initial conceptual categories in relation to the research questions. These initial conceptual categories are discussed below.

# What might be the Pupils' Understandings of Learning (secondary sessions)?

## What is learning?

### Schoolwork

One positive side of moving into secondary school was the increased range of subjects, some of which were new to the pupils and the variety on the timetable. No longer did the pupils always do English and maths everyday in the morning as at primary school.

“I think that it's better here because you've got a much bigger choice of subjects than you had at AS, English, maths and science but here you have like design and technology and food textiles which is probably better”. So

“I like it more here because of the order of the subjects. In AS you had to have..It was always like English and maths in the morning and then all the other subjects in the afternoon but here they can be anywhere in the day. I prefer it that way”.

There were greater amounts of time given to some subjects where previously there had been only a short slot and more likelihood that you would do it, like PE in all weathers. For some pupils subjects had changed for the better for others for the worse, but overall the opportunity to do many different things was welcome.

Lessons were more interesting:

“The lessons are more active now like instead of sitting down in science you do more stuff but you still have to write stuff but you making stuff and seeing things and it's more better and it's more fun”.

However, a whole set of additional demands now fell on pupils having to organise and manage homework, books, the timetable, harder work from the way that lessons are organised each day. Managing this was also a response to the threat of punishment either from school or in outcome, for example missing your bus home. Homework was clearly a major problem for some pupils not only in managing the load but also in its impact on life outside school, either



by preventing the enjoyment or even access to other activities, occupying the time spent with friends or access to time with friends. It was talked about as a continuous presence in the pupils' lives.

## **What might help learning?**

### **Maintaining and making friends**

Friends and friendship was commented upon throughout the discussions. Maintaining friends  
“but then I get to see them (friends) at playtime and lunchtime”,  
loosing friends

“Well, before when I was in AS (Primary School) then I was I used to be really good friends with this girl that was in my class but then we sort of like she made new friends and didn't go around with her as much maybe I can be good friends with her again”

and making friends

“Well when I was at AS I wasn't really friends with Amy very much but but now we're in the same class and now we are really good friends”.

There is a recognition, almost an instruction about the need to make friends “to try and make friends as soon as possible” and that the change of school provides an opportunity to make new friends

“I reckon that in a sense it was better that you weren't with your best friends because it made you try get on with other people”.

Friends provide support for the change

“I think it would have been easier if you had been with a friend cos then you would have been able to go round”

and support for work

“I think it’s sometimes better if you are working with a friend because then you can talk about the subject and you might not really want to talk to the person that’s next to you about what you’ve doing to somebody you don’t really know, then you just do it by yourself and you might like get something wrong that if you’d worked together you could have helped each other on”.

There are also feelings of loss because there are changes to friendship, less access to friends “it’s just like I don’t really have time for my friends any more” and loss in the wider sense of familiarity with everyone, people who you know

“In AS (primary school) I liked knowing everyone cos I just liked knowing everyone, but in IGS (secondary school) you can’t possibly know everyone in your year”

## What makes good teaching?

Teachers received very mixed comments and it was hard to identify common threads apart from the main criteria for a successful teacher’s approach in a lesson was that they offered things that were fun:

“At our old school our teachers just went on and on and we used to get loads and loads of homework and it was really really hard and she just went on and on and we didn’t do anything fun. We just had to sit down and write what was on the board.”

Teachers could be nice and interesting and thereby make the subject interesting but your interest in the subject could be independent of the teacher. A teaching approach that consists of a considerable amount of talk, writing, reading was unwelcome and boring.

“Some teachers like they like give you a sheet and you just have to do it, some just go on talking about something for ages and then you have to do something and then some teachers just make you read a book and then read through a text oar something and then”

as opposed to one that included practical activities or involved you.

“I like lessons where it’s sort of like the teachers are really really funny, there’s lots of funny things and where you get to do action like drama”.

However, there was an acknowledgement that some subjects provided less opportunity for interaction than others.

A teacher’s way of managing the class was also a key factor, telling you off for nothing

“Well I like teachers to be quite strict but not if you talk once you get a detention which is what some of the teachers are` like”,

but there was a range of views on how best to manage a class from being very relaxed to being strict.

Most important was the teacher’s view of you as a person, some of which comments had clearly left deep hurt and/or anger.

“...was ashamed to have her in the school”;

“I’m appalled by what you’ve been doing, you’re all rubbish I think you should try harder”.

In these reported teacher comments, there was some suggestion that some teachers had very little respect for the pupils “and all the teachers like have already insulted you”.

## **Contextual issues: managing transition**

There were an increased number of elements under this category. This seemed to reflect the predominance of meeting personal and social needs following the move into secondary school.

### **Loss, Worry and threat**

Many pupils had worries about the move to secondary school. Overall there was a feeling of strangeness, sometimes disorientation within a new setting. There were fears about getting lost, being told off, getting in a mess. Some of this fear was brought with the pupils into the

new setting “I like thought it would be really horrible”, “I was actually a bit afraid of the teachers”, which had led to periods of anxiety before the move in some pupils. Much of this anxiety was generated by older siblings or pupils but also by teachers in the Primary Schools. Some of it was few floating anxiety that the school was going to be rubbish, the teachers were going to be horrible, but none of these myths or fears materialised.

There were real anxieties over travelling; fear of missing the bus which led to pupils rushing to change out of their PE kit and leaving school half dressed, and fear of being stranded on the school bus uncertain of how all the pupils will behave.

## Tiredness

Many pupils were simply exhausted by the whole process of school. They now got up earlier travelled greater distances to school and returned home later. Following on from this they had increased homework and still wanted to maintain all their other activities. There were pupils who experienced no difficulty with this at all and clearly for those nearer school the travel demands were minimal, then “I don’t get tired at all”.

## Familiarity with surroundings

Pupils’ comments emphasised how hard it is to manage the multiplicity of changes that the move to secondary school brought. “The school being so big”; “It’s a big thing”; “Lots and lots of other pupils”.

The pupils were unfamiliar with their surroundings, not knowing where everything was, not knowing where classes were, going to different rooms for each lesson, getting lost, not understanding maps, having a different arrangement for dinner:

“When it’s Wednesday then they normally have dinners but sometimes cos there’s so many people in the school cos I’m not fast at like walking I can’t get I’m always at the back of the line and I hate the queues cos there’s so many in the school”.

and for break.

This strangeness was an additional load to that of managing to learn.

## Responsibility

Leaving the primary school meant leaving the dizzy heights of being the oldest pupils. “Miss being head of school, top class. Moving down to the bottom bit all again”.

However, pupils expressed the view that they were ‘beyond’ primary school now: they had outgrown that setting “getting a bit too old for Primary” “I’d been at AS (primary school) far too long” and were ready to be treated with more independence, trust and responsibility.

“Even though it’s a big change I like being the youngest class because we get treated just like the year 8s whereas when we were at B and W we were treated not exactly the same but we were treated like we were younger than we were”.

This was evident both in the lessons:

“The teachers don’t tell you how to do everything ten times. They just give you a task too do and then you do it, then you go on to the next thing and then you’re not spending the whole lesson doing something that they’ve told you”.

and at break times:

“At first break you were allowed to eat your snack outside and you were allowed to eat whatever you want really but at our old school you just had to eat it inside and it was milk and you weren’t allowed like crisps or chocolate biscuits or anything you had to have like fruit or cheese strips anything like that”.

## Transition

Pupils did not have many complaints about the way that transition from Primary to Secondary School had been managed and there were some very positive comments. The school had tried to make pupils feel welcome, they had tried to organise some things in a way that was similar to the Primary School at least initially and they had given less homework. There had been allowances for getting lost and arriving late for lessons.

Pupils did make a number of suggestions about what would help the next Year 6 groups.

There was a need for both more time at a visit, and more time to orientate to a setting and time was needed to work things out for yourself. There was a need for more visits, as there simply was not the opportunity to get to know the school on one morning. Adults had directed much of the planning, but all the pupils felt it would be more helpful to have other pupils giving the information. This included going down to the primary school to talk with pupils and offering to take pupils around the secondary school and give them direct information about rooms, lessons and teachers. Information needed to be available earlier so you could get yourself ready for the new school year. You needed your timetable, to know what books were required, which tutor group you were in.

Opinion was divided as to whether you should have more homework in the primary school so you get used to secondary school levels or secondary school should have a reduced load to allow new pupils to adjust over the year.

There was a need to end a lot of the myths either by providing clear information, for example when did you actually get a detention and to suggest to staff that they were giving an impression of the secondary school that caused anxiety which the pupils could do nothing about and then turned out to be untrue.

## **What understandings might have developed following the sessions?**

### **What was remembered?**

A large number of activities were recalled brainstorm, mind mapping, visualization, relaxation, and so on, but not necessarily how this might help with learning. The activity that was recalled very frequently was the jokes, which was used to introduce the ideas of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning (VAK). It had responses from highly negative to positive, largely around whether the jokes were funny or not, generally not. This seems to link very clearly to strongest comment about lessons

that they should be fun or one of the few aspects that was familiar and could be assessed against prior knowledge.

## **What was used?**

Much less appeared to be used though a number of pupils had used mind maps in and out of school and used relaxation and visualization to counter times of stress

“When we did the HP (Harry Potter) thing about the train it calmed us down and that helped when you got a bit stressed about school”;

“I’ve used my mind map. I’ve still got that and I used it to see what I’d said and to see what I wanted and wanted from here”.

## **Did not learn anything and was boring**

For a number of pupils they did not learn anything and they were bored. They would have preferred to have their usual lesson:

“Um I didn’t learn anything really so I didn’t know what to put”.

## **Did not learn anything but enjoyed it**

For other pupils they did not learn anything but they enjoyed it. For some this was about missing something else even less appealing, for others the activities were interesting in themselves but they did not see them as relevant to anything they did in school

“It was something to look forward to so if you were having a bad day and I could look forward to it kinda because it is like fun”.

## **Did learn something and enjoyed it**

Some pupils did say that they had found out information that they valued:

“I was a kinaesthetic learner so I’d be better like doing things and I think that’s kind of true because in some lessons I’m not very good at you don’t really do anything you just kinda of read or listen and you have to take it in but I’m not very good at that”.

This enabled them to think about what might get in the way of their own learning.

Other comments identified that the sessions were somehow different to other lessons and that it was important for them and the teachers to know about learning.

“I think when you said it matters about lessons I don’t really think what lesson you have matters because we’re going to have those kind of lessons for two years and more and you have it in cycles so it doesn’t really matter too much if you miss them”.

## **Uncertainty about what it was all about**

There was an issue around not really understanding what it was all about, but in returning to the sessions there was recognition of usefulness. There was a sense that there was a need for more time to consider the concept of learning and what it may involve “but then I didn’t really understand much what it was doing”.

“Because before I hardly ever even heard of kin (kinaesthetic) that sort of thing but now I understand what they are”;

“I agree with B. I’d like to do some more now I understand it more”;

“Well um it’s like your brain”;

“Well I was just going to say something different I was just going to say to be honest with you I tend to think after we’d stopped having the sessions and we were concentrating on the move to the grammar school I basically forgot about them but now when we came back here and we started having all those tests it reminded me but like I said I’d like to have them because now I realise how important it is for the teachers to understand the way that you learn um I think it would be a good idea to do it again because um now I that we’re back on it and I can remember things then and um I really understand it much better”;

“Well I think that it’s really important them to learn straight away and quite deeply what kin, aud and visual is because I didn’t really understand very well when I started



doing it but now I understand I think it's really important you need to know like otherwise you don't see the point of it";

"Well I suppose since you a doing lots of things about different sorts of learning you could maybe do it again";

"I think yeah it does actually help you in sense that might not always think back to the day that you actually gave us the lesson but you will still remember the actual thing that you taught us";

"It kinda made you think about how like you best learnt and then you could be easier to find out like different ways of doing that".

The above quotes emphasise that the information was not easily assimilated but it seems that gradually the information has consolidated over time and pupils have begun to reflect and even research their own learning for themselves.

## **Emerging Theories of Pupils' Understandings of Learning: Developments following the Sessions and Experience of School Change**

Exploring these categories further for patterns, I began to identify links between categories, which supported emerging theories. These emerging theories were:

- Schoolwork is not learning
- Adults provide direction, information and help
- The importance of peer relationships
- The dominance of personal and social needs

## **Schoolwork is not learning**

The pupils did have an understanding of learning, however this was not generally part of work in school. School time and increasingly in the secondary school, home time, was devoted to completing adult set tasks. Attainment dominates. Schoolwork was then about attending to, following and reproducing adult information. Interest is provided by the way in which material is presented, with some subjects and teachers more able to inject fun, by an increased range of subjects, or by activities, which are not commonly part of the school routine, trips out, or which are not part of school.

## **Adults provide direction, information and help**

Both teachers and parents were sources of information and problem solvers for schoolwork. Neither pupils nor teachers saw themselves as sources of questioning, challenge, creativity or exploration. They were providers of the right answer or the right method.

## **The importance of peer relationships**

The most important feature of school life was friends. They provided a network of emotional, social and schoolwork support. The wider peer group was seen as a key to positive experiences of school; this group could provide friendship, care, an atmosphere for learning as well as the possibility of rejection or humiliation, through being bullied or made to look foolish.

## **Dominance of personal and social needs**

The emphasis on the social side of school, friendship, clearly showed how schoolwork is secondary to relationships. Anxieties were increasingly evident with the move to secondary school and these were expressed around basic personal and social needs. The need to be sure of getting to and from home, the need to know where to go, the need for food, the need for

sleep and rest. There was a significant challenge to how pupils saw themselves and a search for reassurance in maintaining and making friends, but also a search for a new self in 'moving on' from primary school, 'joining' secondary life, taking on new responsibilities and in turn being viewed as more responsible.

## **Learning is seen as about outcomes**

I considered these emerging theories in relation to the third research question:

- How might pupils use their knowledge of different ways of learning and of themselves as learners to support their transition from primary to secondary school?

In a context where learning is essentially seen as about outcomes, in particular, attainment, there was a major difficulty in introducing ideas about ways of learning and suggesting that pupils research their own approaches to learning and use this knowledge to support further learning. For a number of pupils the mismatch was unmanageable and clearly the information from the sessions was unhelpful:

“Um sort it said like what did you learn from this lesson um I didn't learn anything really so I didn't know what to put”.

Or, at best, provided respite from a more boring lesson, however for others there was the beginning of self-questioning and self-reflection about learning processes.

“Well I was just going to say something different I was just going to say to be honest with you, I tend to think after we'd stopped having the sessions and we were concentrating on the move to the grammar school I basically forgot about them but now when we came back here and we started having all those tests it reminded me but like I said I'd like to have them because now I realise how important it is for the teachers to understand the way that you learn um I think it would be a good idea to do it again because um now I that we're back on it and I can remember things then and um I really understand it much better”.

The analysis then suggests that these pupils' understandings of learning at the end of primary school and as they move into secondary school is that it is about an increasing accumulation of knowledge which is teacher led. A main concern for the pupils is to demonstrate high attainment, however their major focus is on building and maintaining relationships and this dominates the transition between primary and secondary school. This later focus is then generally unreceptive to information about processes and tools of learning, however some pupils begin to question and consider their own and others ways of learning. This disjunction and possible explanations are considered in chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The research set out to examine whether the use of teaching might be a genuine way for educational psychologists to consult with pupils about their understanding of their own learning and their experience of school. I consider that a key objective of any work I undertake with children or young people is that the process enables them to have a greater understanding of themselves as learners and a way or ways of taking greater control of their own learning. However my experience suggested that these aims of professional practice were often at odds with the expectations of the pupils themselves, parents and other professionals. Exploring a number of models of pupil participation provided a framework for considering alternative ways of consulting with pupils. Teaching was selected as a way of both drawing on and embedding professional consultation within everyday classroom practice. The process was then to explore with the pupils their understanding of learning and offer them psychological information about learning, which they could explore for themselves. In this way I hoped that the pupils would have access to a knowledge base about their own learning that they could draw on to support their work in school and their move from primary to secondary school. As such pupils could be actively involved in decision-making about managing their own ways of learning. The focus of the analysis is on the voices of the pupils themselves; what they said about their understanding of learning and their experience of school. It was this voice that I, as a professional practitioner, wanted to access, rather than the voices of other professionals or indeed myself.

This chapter then addresses the final research question 'is teaching a way of professionally consulting with pupils? In other words did teaching enable pupils to share their understanding of learning and their experience of school with me? The other 3 questions were addressed in

the previous chapter through the discussion arising from the process of analysis. This initial analysis suggested that: -

- learning in school is seen by both pupils and teachers as content rather than as a process;
- there is a dominance of personal and social needs amongst pupils, which is heightened in the transition from primary to secondary school;
- the peer group is seen as the most important resource for friendship, support and learning as well as being a possible source of hindrance to all of these;
- introducing ideas about the psychology of learning is hard to assimilate within a school context focused on outcomes. Some pupils, however, appeared to begin to reconsider their understandings of learning.

In this chapter, I

- consider the way in which the pupils' understandings of learning changed or developed;
- suggest some possible explanations for the limits of pupil involvement, relating these to a number of current models of pupil participation and empowerment, and introduce activity theory (Engestrom, 1999) as a useful way of considering change;
- examine the impact on the school as an organisation of this way of working and the limits of its impact;
- consider the implications of this research for the professional practice of educational psychologists;
- explore contexts that might support this way of working with pupils and research that points the way forward;
- put forward a possible model for pupil participation and empowerment to support the work of educational psychologists.

Finally I discuss the limitations of the study and set out my concluding comments on the outcomes of the research for furthering pupil participation and pupil empowerment.

## What were the pupils' Understandings of Learning?

Consultation with pupils through teaching set out to explore the pupils' understanding of their own learning as they moved from the setting of the primary school to that of the secondary school and to offer them information about learning whose usefulness they could evaluate for themselves. In working with the pupils, it became clear that the pupils appeared to be unused to any active consideration of their own ways of learning.

Within school pupils' understanding of learning was that learning is about content. Views from teaching staff did not differ, though they explained that this was the result of the constraints of the National Curriculum and SATS. The purpose of learning was to get good results and gain higher marks and the way that this would be achieved was through application, concentration, repetition and revision. Pupils frequently referred to learning *to do* something rather than learning *how to*: so they can learn to listen, join in, complete their homework, spell, and get better at handwriting: a focus on *tasks* not *process*. Within the confines of school, learning seemed to be a very passive activity that incidentally provided interest or enjoyment because the teacher made the presentation 'fun'. Success in learning did not seem to be related to a greater understanding or engagement in inquiry, but an accumulation of 'stuff' and an increasing variety of content. Learning became attainment that provided limited ongoing satisfaction and few opportunities for enjoyment. These views are very similar to those expressed by Claxton, Atkinson, Osborn, and Wallace (1999), and Desforges (2001), Watkins, Carnell, Lodge, Wagner and Whalley (2001), who all described this performance orientation of learning as the common conception of learning within teaching.

This was in contrast to what pupils wanted from lessons, where the main criteria for success was being offered things that were 'fun'. Curriculum delivery reliant on talk, writing, reading

and copying was unwelcome and dull. Teachers who involved pupils or who introduced practical activities provided more satisfaction. These views about curriculum delivery are not dissimilar to those identified by Young (1999). However it was the teacher's responsibility to provide the interest and it was the methods of presentation that provided the fun, rather than the process of learning in that or any other subject.

There was then a mismatch between what pupils' generally experienced in lessons and the kinds of experiences they wanted. This is further confirmatory evidence of Rudduck's (2000) finding of the disparity between adult directed learning and pupil directed learning.

Introducing pupils to ways of thinking about their own learning produced a further mismatch between their search for content and our emphasis on process. This was clearly highlighted in the comments back from pupils about what they felt they had learnt from the sessions. For some they had learnt nothing and found nothing to be of use. This may be a comment that other lessons would receive, but it clearly indicates the lack of success of the sessions for them. However for others there was the beginning of redefining their construct of learning within school. Predominantly, comments referred to particular activities that had been 'learnt', however a number of responses identified metacognitive skills, highlighting that learning involves thinking about processes as well as facts. This echoes the pupils' initial reflections on learning identified through looking at how they learnt to ride a bike that did demonstrate their knowledge of key features involved with active learning.

Learning within school then seems to have a particular construction. This construction appears to limit the transfer or application of knowledge and skills from other life experiences into subject based learning and focuses very firmly on learning as having a clear knowledge of what you have been told or you have read. As such the expectation of pupils is that teachers should explain clearly what you need to do, you should ask if you do not understand, you should complete the work, and improve through practice that includes regularly handing in your homework. Within such a construction, there is little opportunity or encouragement

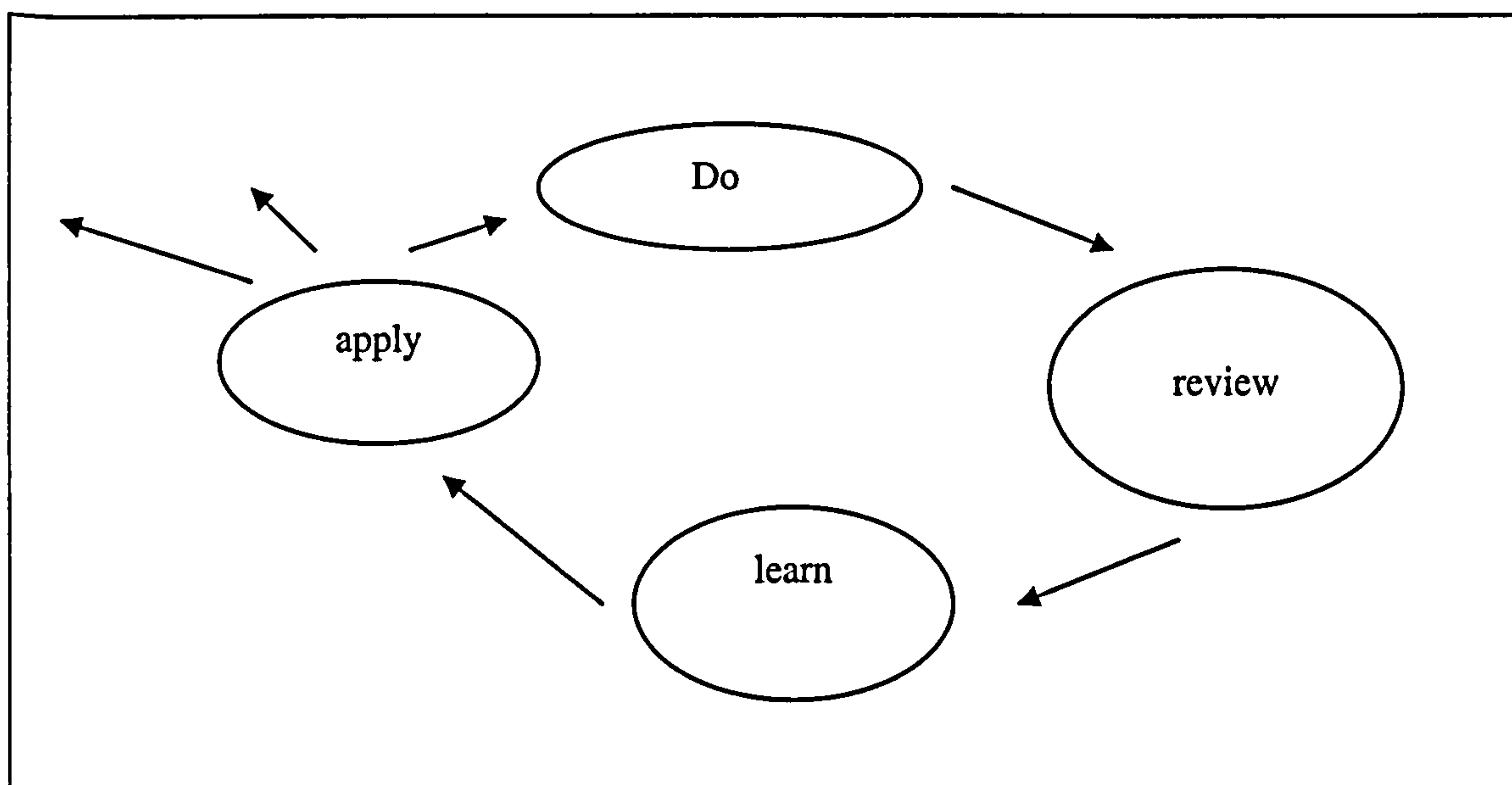


for active pupil participation. This understanding of learning reflects the polarization in current debates about learning, where there is an ever increasing emphasis on performance and outcomes in contrast to attempts to introduce learning as exploration or collaboration into schools (Claxton, Atkinson, Osborn and Wallace, 1999).

As Educational Psychologists attempting to set up a consultation process with pupils we were hoping to act as co-learners and co-researchers however we felt cast in the role of expert and felt that the pupils saw themselves as recipients rather than as partners. However, as the sessions moved on, some pupils appeared to begin to consider their own school learning in new ways and some attempted to apply these processes into new activities. This could be seen to represent a move from a focus on receiving information to becoming active in their own learning. In exploring this further, the comments from the focus groups are interesting in identifying that the pupils, or some of them, did not really understand what the sessions were all about. It was only on reflection from revisiting the ideas that it was possible to consider the value of focussing on the 'how' of learning rather than the 'what'. Some pupils seemed to begin to reflect on ways of learning for themselves.

This process is illustrated in Figure 5.1 below. Information about learning remained at the 'do' point for some pupils: it was another task to be completed. For others it was a process, which, on reflection, may be useful to them but they had as yet been unable to apply it. This could be said to be the beginning of the use of a transformative concept of knowledge (Young 1999). They had reached the 'learn' point. For others they had learnt and applied it to wider contexts. Within the school context learning was generally understood as successful at the 'do' point: information was acquired and reproduced effectively. This could be similar to what Pollard (1985) describes as a negotiated 'working consensus' that both pupils and teachers had 'agreed' to a 'delivered curriculum'.

**Figure 5.1: The learning cycle**



## **Possible Explanations for the Limits of Pupil Involvement**

### **The culture of school**

Pupils' experience of the wider school context impacted profoundly on their approach to learning. This was evidenced in the pupils' reference to the demands of school life, the importance of relationships within and outside school and their desire to be seen not as pupils but as individuals. I consider these key issues in the following sections.

### **Resignation**

Overall the pupil's description of the school context is worrying. Much of the experience of school was characterised by stress and anxiety. This was expressed very directly following the move into secondary school but was an ever present backdrop to life in the primary school as well. In the primary school there were constant references to the work demands of school, particularly in expectations of high achievement in SATs, the need to be in the right sets, the need for good teachers, the need to have proper facilities and the need to work hard and complete homework. The clear emphasis was on getting work right and seeing success as

knowing what to do, passing tests and culminating in doing well in SATS. It appeared less permissible to express concerns about SATs, with an emphasis on trying not to worry, but it was evident that these assessments posed a considerable burden. Many pupils described a combination of nurturing and policing to support their learning. This could be characterised as providing a thermostat approach to their learning; ensuring that mechanisms were in place which triggered action to maintain the focus on successful attainment.

Moving on to secondary school, there was more overt expression of anxiety related to uncertainties and potential threats of the new setting, along with some feelings of excitement and expectation. These dual emotions have been reflected in previous research. Tobbell (2003) concluded that for many transition was not a positive process, whereas Lucey and Reay (2000) acknowledged the anxieties around transition, but they argued there has been too little emphasis on the excitement of anticipated change. In this study, there were many fears about travel, relationships, work demands, teacher behaviour and the overall environment. There was uncertainty about how teachers would manage them and what behaviour might result in punishment. There was fear of losing friendships and maintaining friendships and some expressions about fear of bullying. Excitement was less evident.

Once the move to secondary had taken place life was frequently characterized as demanding and exhausting. Pupils' comments emphasised how hard it was to manage the multiplicity of changes that the move to secondary school had brought. They now got up earlier, travelled greater distances to school and returned home later. They were unfamiliar with their surroundings, not knowing where everything is, not knowing where classes are, going to different rooms for each lesson, getting lost, not understanding maps, having a different arrangement for dinner. A whole set of additional demands fell on pupils having to organise and manage equipment, homework, books, and the timetable. Managing all this was also a response to the threat of punishment either from school or in outcome, for example missing your bus home.

Homework was clearly a major problem for some pupils not only in managing the load but also in its impact on life outside school, either by preventing the enjoyment of or even access to other activities, occupying the time spent with friends or access to time with friends.

“ You just do your homework and that’s all you do just you don’t bother I don’t do anything I used to play out or just play football or something but I just don’t anymore”.

It was talked about as a continuous presence in the pupils’ lives.

“Or it’s just going to get so boring that all your life you’re just going to be doing homework when you stop getting homework you’re just going to have nothing to do”.

Many pupils were simply exhausted by the whole process of school. The importance of schoolwork dominated all other activities.

Entering secondary school seems to be an experience of resignation, characterized most poignantly by ‘you get used to it’.

“ Now I’ve got used to it-just get used to it-but it gets easier I think”.

School encompasses and invades your whole life but there is little or no control of this situation. This echoes a recent report that highlighted the sadness experienced by pupils following transfer to secondary school (Berliner, 2004). Resignation characterizes the way classes are organised, lessons are organised, the teaching day, the need to undertake and complete homework. The description of school life remarkably mirrors that given by many adults about their working life. School intrudes into your everyday life, it interferes with your social life and it prevents you spending time with your friends. It limits the amount of time you spend on activities you enjoy and you feel tired because of travelling to and fro and having to complete work at home.

Clearly the experience of the move from primary to secondary school is expressed as having a significant negative impact, but there is some continuity in the pupils’ views about school.

The organisation of the primary school allowed for an active social life, but fun and pleasure

are still seen as generally outside school or outside the general run of school activities. Going on a trip is seen as fun because it is exceptional to a normal school day.

School is then generally a place that you have to put up with. The primary school has the comfort of being known whereas secondary school is entirely unfamiliar. In neither setting is the commentary about being able to make changes for yourself, but rather a way of finding the best accommodation. All this comes across as an experience of being driven, of life not being within your control, that is stressful.

Within the move from primary to secondary school there was no space for learning; let alone active learning. The pupils' main focus was on meeting personal and social needs. The feeling of being overwhelmed by change would offer some explanation for the frequently replicated findings of the 'dip' or 'hiatus' in performance following the transition (Galton, Gray and Rudduck 1999; Galton, Morrison and Pell, 2000). This focus on meeting personal and social needs dominated the move to secondary school but was central to life in the primary school as well.

## Relationships

The most important part of school was social relationships. Within the primary school pupils operated within a known set of social relationships constructed over a long period of time and within a known set of social rules. The strongest network of support was that of friends and people that were known to you. The greatest anxieties were expressed about changes in these social relationships, which would be dislocated by the change to secondary school. This dislocation did not only affect school life but impacted on your whole life. Maintaining, making and losing friends was central to school life, but this was more than having or not having friends. It was concerned with how to maintain and build relationships within the new secondary school life.

In the primary context pupils knew everyone and everyone knew them. In secondary school this is not possible and there is a sense of uncertainty about how you would go about getting to know other people and pupils. Relationships with teachers were unclear in the transition. Whereas pupils had a working knowledge of teachers and their style in the primary school

“We had Mr F., Mrs F could not control you but Mr F. had a bit of it”;

and a view of how the teachers worked with you as pupils, some positive and some very negative, this was all unknown territory in the secondary school.

Relationships with friends remained key to school life, but there was significant change in secondary school. Relationships with friends changed both in and out of school, so that whereas you had spent the majority of your time with your friends in the same class, same activities, same break times in primary school, you now had different and distinct times with friends.

“It’s really strange because like the people I used to like sit next to and see loads of the time I only like bump into in the corridors. It’s really strange”.

There were new friends from being in a tutor group and in classes, some maintenance of old friends at break times and the impact of school demands on opportunity to spend time with friends outside school.

There was also consideration of the role of friends in supporting work in and out of school, so that working with a friend in class could enhance your achievements,

“I think it’s sometimes better if you are working with a friend because then you can talk about the subject and you might not really want to talk to the person that’s next to you about what you’ve doing to somebody you don’t really know, then you just do it by yourself and you might like get something wrong that if you’d worked together you could have helped each other on”.

whereas working alongside someone with whom you didn’t get on could place you in difficulties.

“But I don’t like that because I have to sit next this boy and if we ever have to like work together then he just sits there and he goes ‘Come On, you think and I’ll write’ and I don’t like that because he doesn’t do any work and he just makes me do it and then if you have to say what you’ve done then he puts his hand up then he says all that stuff and makes it out that’s he’s done everything and I’ve just sat there and it’s really annoying”.

Friendships and their working style impacted on schoolwork outside school, such that coming together as friends actually might mean doing homework together,

“But you don’t really want to spend all your time with your friends doing homework”.

The strongest network of support was clearly seen as that of friends. This emphasises the power of positive peer relationships. Though alongside this there was comment on the way that friends or peers can interfere. This complexity in pupils’ understanding of and importance of personal relationships has been frequently identified in research (Demetriou, Goalen and Rudduck, 2000). Comments by pupils on help, encouragement, and support were largely vested within the friendship or peer group. It was to these groups that you turned for help and it was the possible break-up of these groups that caused the most concern over change to a new school. Teachers and home were not identified as particularly supportive in this way; rather their support was about directing and controlling activities, as well as providing opportunities for different experiences. I was left with the impression that friends would be the first port of call for social, emotional and work support.

The major focus then for pupils within school is the forging and sustaining of positive social relationships with your peers. The value placed on social relationships seemed far greater than that placed on learning in school. At a time of change from primary to secondary school then what pupils wanted to address was their need for a supportive community of peers.

## Individuality

Within the environment of school, where the expectation was that pupils fitted into the organisation and conformed to adult expectations, there is a continual attempt by pupils to mark themselves out as individuals. Pupils wanted teachers to be aware of them as a person who had particular strengths and weaknesses. They wanted to be seen as separate from particular family members or particular groups. Pupils wanted individualised help from teachers, so that misunderstanding or difficulties could be addressed directly to them. Most evidently they wanted to be respected for themselves and carried hurt or anger from comments that particular teachers had made to them. They expressed different needs in the way that they wanted lessons to be organised, different views on teaching style, different interests, different responses to our sessions, different views on what would help the transition between schools,

“ But if you tried to be someone else that you weren't who you are that's just so confusing to find out who you are because you say to yourself oh I'm sensible I think I've got to be something under the category of sensible but actually how you are to your friends and your mum and dad and everything that's who you are really and I think that they should be themselves”.

Within this desire to be seen as someone distinct, was a wish to be more active participants in the process of schooling. Pupils wanted to contribute to information about the change of school, they wanted access to pupils who would tell them about the new school and they in turn wanted to tell incoming pupils. This recognition of the individual experience of pupils has been illuminated by Reay and Lucey (2000) and Lucey and Reay (2000), however the emphasis placed by pupils on personalized approaches has not been such an evident theme in other research.

As pupils they wanted to be seen as individuals but also as pupils who had a valid contribution to make and individual and different perspectives on school life. Within the organisation of school, it is often difficult to see a recognised place for individuality. In many



ways this desire to be distinct can limit the effect on overall change within school, as individuality is often expressed at the margins, in particular presentation of behaviour rather than towards the business of teaching and learning.

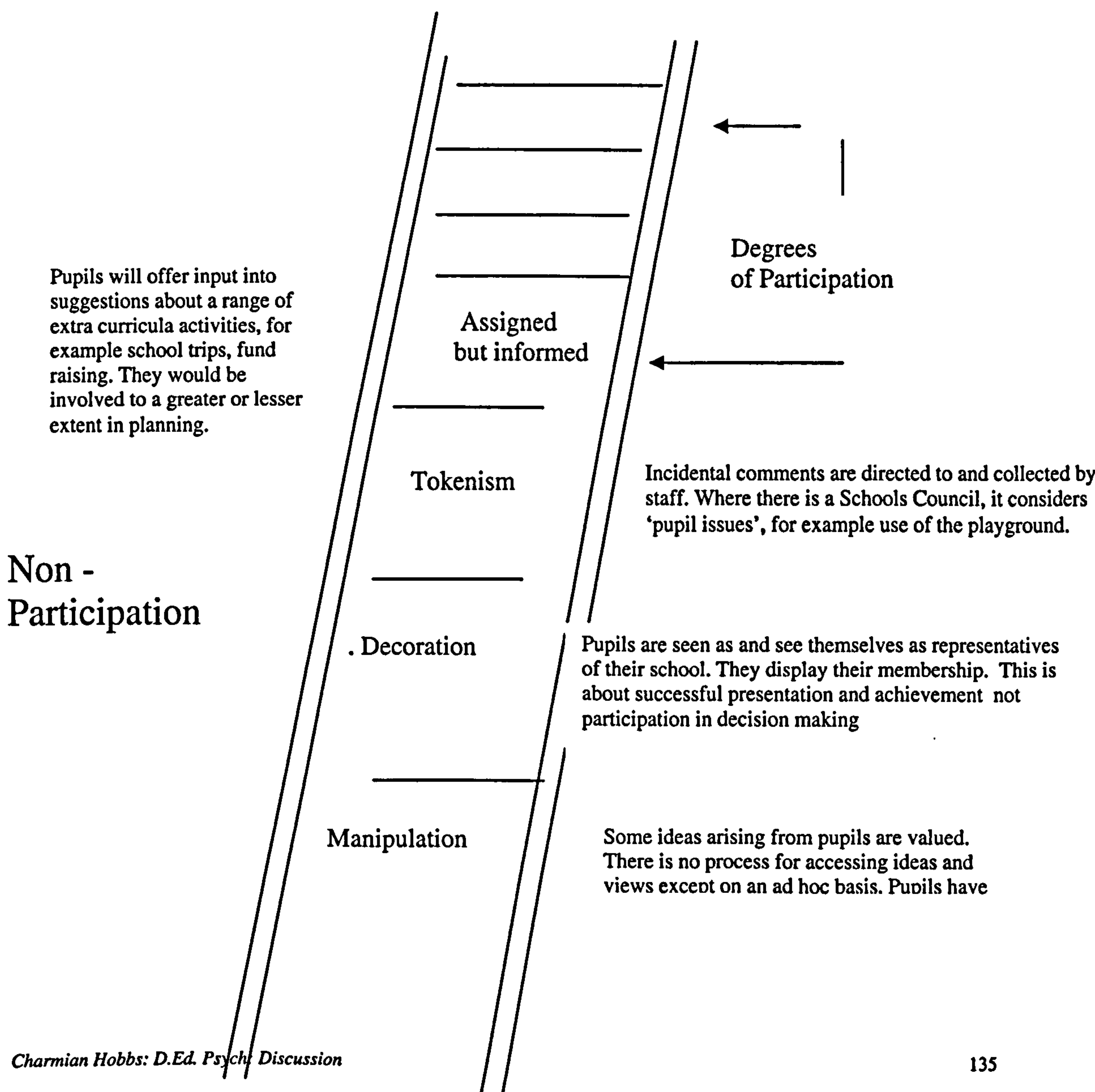
## **Pupil's experience of school and participation**

Pupils' description of their life in school seemed to be characterized by disempowerment. They had little opportunity to be involved in making decisions about their own learning or in decisions about their wider social environment. Their experience of school seemed to be one of general tolerance and familiarity in primary school and of invasion at secondary school. What pupils looked for within school was not to be excited by learning but the security and support of known social relationships, most particularly friends. Excitement and fun generally lay beyond the school gates. Significant uncertainty was brought about by the prospect and actuality of school change. This impacted on their construction of themselves as people and pupils. Within the familiar world of the primary school the roles and relationships had been negotiated and agreed over many years. In this context pupils knew where they stood. Moving into a new context, roles and relationships were unknown. There was a sense of vulnerability, flux and unpredictability. The focus then was on achieving an understanding and place in this new set of relationships. School life was dominated by personal and social needs, which forwarded new constructions of current and past experiences. Secondary school now provided the opportunity to make new friends, find out about new subjects, and move away from old relationships with familiar teachers, to be treated appropriately for one's age. Primary school became a setting which pupils had grown beyond, characterized by over familiarity and predictability. Pupils were now in the business of reconstructing themselves as secondary school pupils, however their experience of participation in either setting remains limited.

# Models of Pupil Participation and the Research Schools

Examining how pupil participation in the research schools might map on to models of pupil participation poses some difficulties. From the analysis it would seem clear that pupils do not actively participate within school. Mapping the information from the research schools on to the 'Ladder of Participation' suggests that pupils might reach step 4: 'assigned but informed' (See figure 5.2 below)

**Figure 5.2: Ladder of Participation within the research schools (Adapted from Hart (1995))**



However in exploring this further, I considered different areas of school life. From this it is possible to ask whether the models should be considered in relation to all of school life or applied separately to, say, learning and social experiences. In relation to learning, pupils clearly had no access to how learning was planned, delivered or reviewed. In relation to social experience, there was greater access if only in terms of being given information and understanding what might be involved. However even in this area, pupils tend to fall into the role of being a 'source of data' rather than actively involved. This is not to say that the culture of the schools is one that would dismiss the views of pupils, particularly in the primary schools, however the culture is one that supports adult control. The model then in itself, though providing a framework for consideration, does not address the complexity of school life.

**Figure 5.3: Mapping the research information on to the domains of social capital (see page 137)**

Domain	Description	Research Schools
Empowerment	Pupils are involved in making choices about their own learning and are involved in decisions and choices about the wider social environment that affects them.	No involvement in making choices about own learning. Very limited involvement in decisions about wider social environment, with increasing restriction in the secondary school
Participation	Pupils participate fully in the learning and social activities in school	Pupils did participate fully
Associational activity and common purpose	Pupils co-operate with each other in both formal and informal groups	Pupils did co-operate
Supporting networks and reciprocity	Pupils support one another for either mutual or one-sided gain. There is an expectation that help would be given or received from others when needed	This was reported as strongest feature of school life
Collective norms and values	Pupils and staff share common values and norms for behaviour	Adults had expectations and pupils knew what these were. They had not been jointly agreed
Trust	Pupils trust one another and the staff and support agencies who work with them	Pupils had a knowledge of staff in the primary school, so they knew where they stood. This had not yet developed in secondary school. There was clear evidence of distrust of some staff
Safety	Pupils feel safe in school and do not restrict their use of parts of the school or aspects of school life because of fear.	Pupils generally felt safe in primary school but less safe in secondary
Belonging	Pupils feel connected and have a sense of belonging to the school	Pupils expressed a belonging in primary but this was just beginning in the secondary school

Hayes, B. (2002) adapted from the Lynch analysis of the domains of social capital (Cantle, 2001)

Hayes (2002) provides a further way of viewing pupil participation within schools. The information mapped on to the table as in Figure 5.3 above. Once again there are complexities in the inclusion of pupils within the school settings that are difficult to demonstrate within this model, but it does serve to highlight a division between social relationships between pupils and the learning life within the school. In many ways then pupils saw themselves in school as 'in attendance', ready to absorb information as given to them. Teachers acted as suppliers of information, who were viewed most positively when they acted in the role of group animator.

## **Pupil agency within the research schools**

Examining the mismatch between models of pupils' participation and the reality of pupils' everyday experience of learning and school life drew my attention to how learners interpret and respond to the opportunities that are available to them. Although I presented the pupils with information about ways of learning and a range of tools and techniques to explore this for themselves, I realised the context in which this opportunity was presented had already shaped the ways of thinking and action available. In order to consider the usefulness of ways of professionally consulting with pupils, mapping the analysis on to a number of models of pupil participation was illuminating, but failed to provide a way of addressing the complexity of pupil participation within schools. It would be useful to focus on the culture and systems within the schools, which had given rise to particular relationships and ways of understanding.

## **Consultation through Teaching: The Impact on the School as an Organisation.**

A way of illuminating this exploration was to draw on socio-cultural research and activity theory, a development of the work of Vygotsky, to provide a way of mapping the research outcomes.

The premise of sociocultural theory is that mind is formed socially in interaction with our experience of our culture. Culture can be a somewhat fuzzy concept but generally is seen to describe the shared schemas, understandings, social conventions, artefacts and language developed historically and currently. In this sense our experience of culture both shapes and is shaped by participants. Culture then mediates our understandings and provides opportunities for constructing and reconstructing these understandings. Socio-cultural theory would then emphasise the strength of the relationship between culture, mind and action and therefore the need to interrogate the relationship between agency, action and context. Knowledge is constructed through participation in communities, and particular communities, whilst drawing on wider cultural and historical understandings, mediate knowledge through the particular conventions in use in that setting. The process is not seen as static, learning is participatory and the 'funds of knowledge' (Moll, 1990) held within the community can be used to scaffold the understandings of others in that community or may cross boundaries and augment the knowledge in other communities.

Agency then can be defined as increasingly effective participation of individuals within the activities of the system. Effective participation is not about acquisition of increasing amounts of stored knowledge but about developing an ability to use, re-represent and reinterpret understanding as a basis for discovering the possibilities for taking action. In Foucault's (1970) terms, agency tries to account for individuals as they stand out from and are intractably tied to social practices of a given historical period. In this sense this research examined the agency, the potential for action, of us as professional practitioners and of the pupils. A way of examining the agency within the school systems is to consider the range of activity available to the participants within that system. In this research, that is both the pupils and us as practitioner researchers. Drawing on Engestrom's analytic framework (Engestrom, 1999) it is possible to see how actions are shaped and shape the possibilities for action within any system. In particular when considering the possibilities for pupil participation in the research

**schools, what are the rules that govern the relationships between pupil and teacher, what are the understandings of learning that underpin teaching, and so on.**

**Activity Theory (Engestrom, 1999) provides a framework for mapping interrelationships and developments within institutional settings. According to Edwards (2000) using the framework**

**'analyses of complex interactions can capture expectations of responsibility and behaviour driven by institutional history, the intended and unintended goals of activities, the extent to which the initiative is being accepted and rejected by the system as a whole, the division of labour among key players, who is excluded, where change is occurring over time and where help is needed. These systemic analyses are not seeking equilibrium. Instead, the contradictions and turbulence identified within systems are characterised as points for systemic adaption or expansive learning'.**

**(p. 200).**

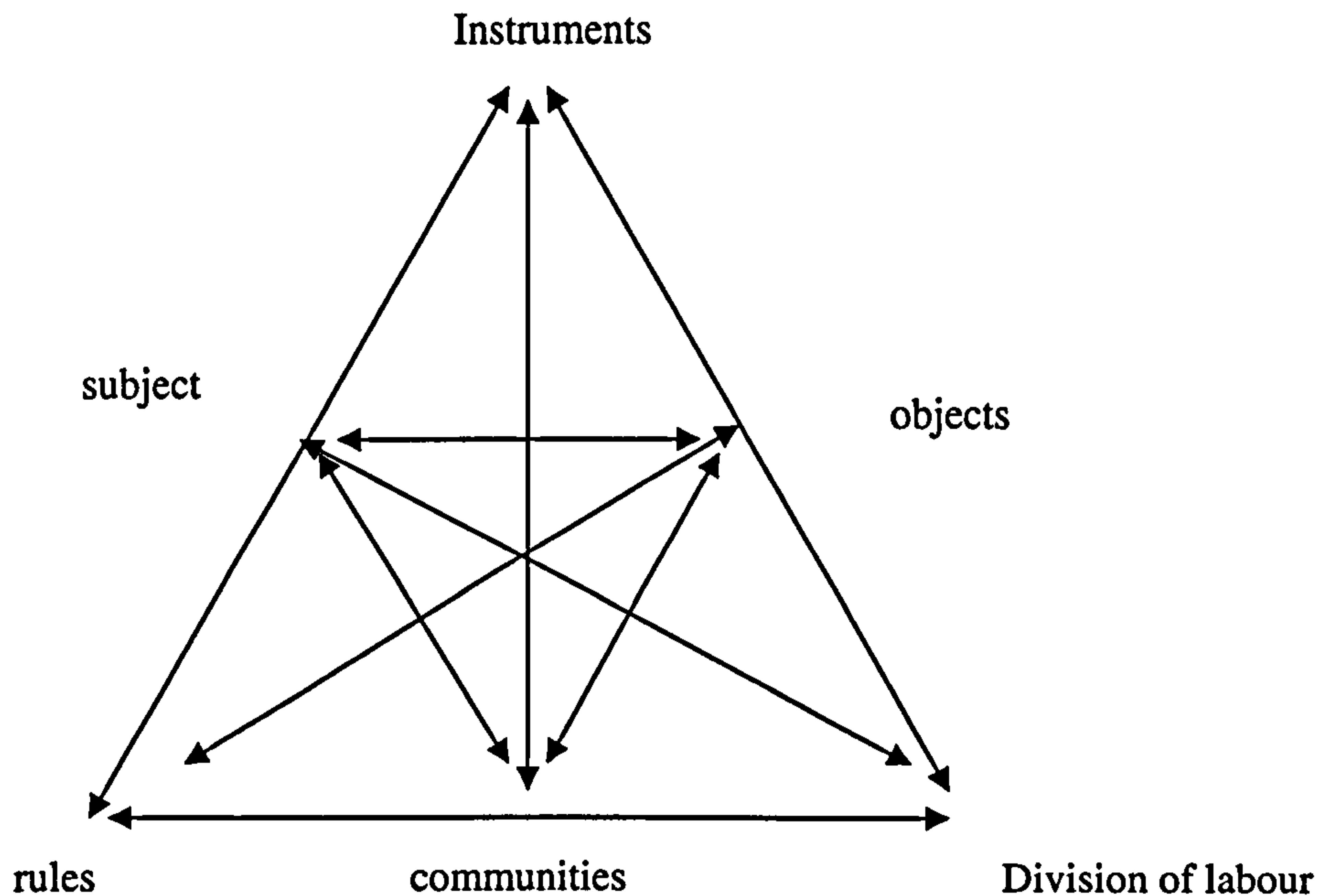
**Such a model, I think would be complimentary to the one outlined by Rudduck and Flutter (2000) which considered the conditions for learning in school, because it explicitly draws in the cultural and historical influences.**

**Activity theory attempts to understand change at the individual and collective level by considering the interrelationships that have evolved within and between social, historical, material and technical factors and how these interrelationships form an 'activity system' which in turn structures and is structured by our actions. Our understanding and action is developed and mediated through 'artefacts', tools that represent social meaning, for example machines, language, music, and gesture. Actions are relatively shortlived, however activity systems evolve over lengthy periods of socio-historical time, often taking the form of organisations or institutions. As such activity systems provide the setting for the reproduction of culture (internalisation), but also the transformation of culture by the creation of new artefacts, including knowledge. Contradictions and tensions, which occur in activity systems, provide the potential for learning and change. Engestrom's activity system is illustrated in**

**Figure 5.4: Engestrom's 'Activity System'.**

An activity system integrates the subject, the object and the instruments (material tools as well as signs and symbols) into a unified whole. A human activity system always contains the subsystems of production, distribution, exchange and consumption

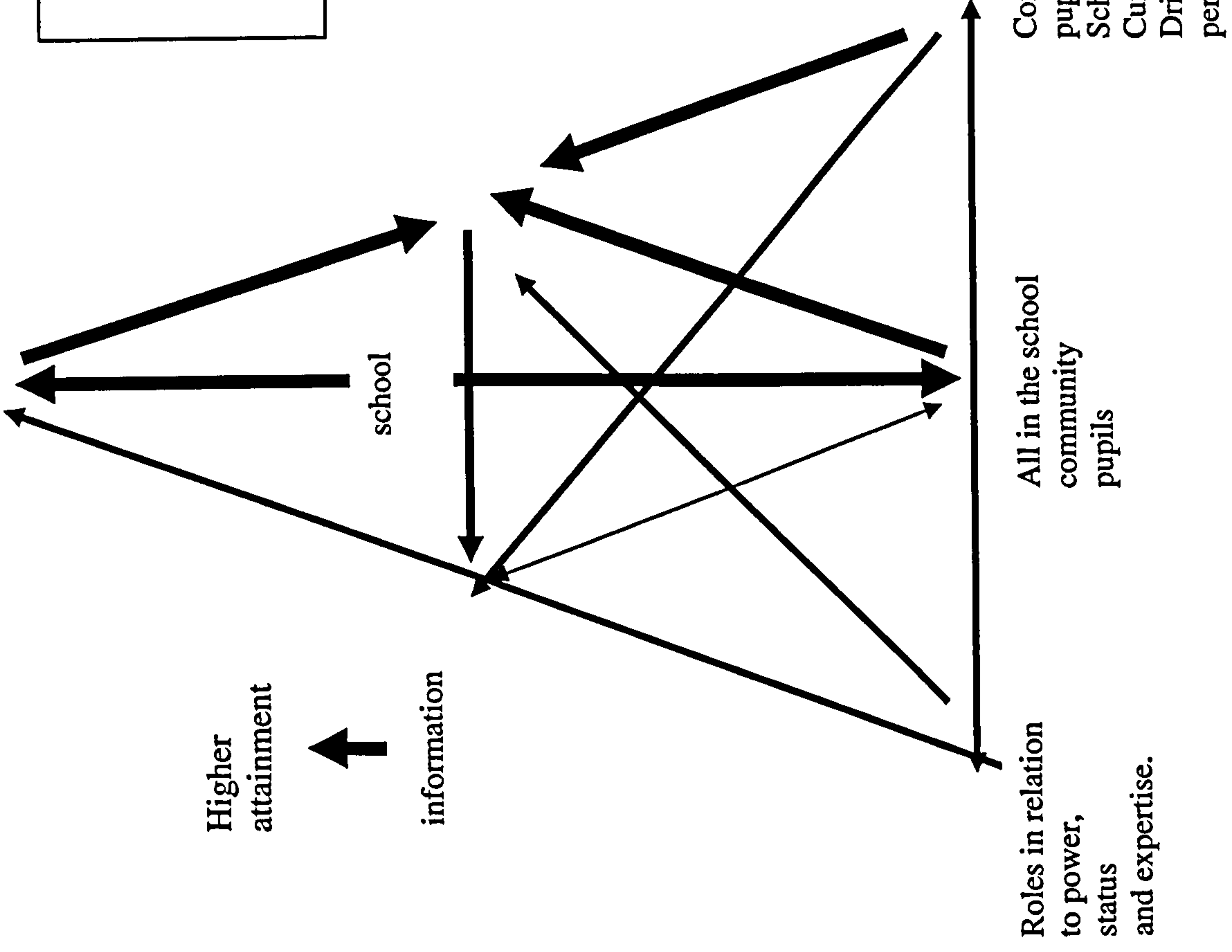
A model of an activity system



The *subject* refers to the individual or sub group whose agency is chosen as the point of view in the analysis. The *object* refers to the raw material or problem space in which the activity is directed and which is moulded or transformed into outcomes with the help of mediating *instruments*, including both tools and signs. The *community* comprises multiple individuals and /or sub groups who share the same general object and who construct themselves as distinct from other communities. The *division of labour* refers to both the horizontal division of tasks between members of the community and to the vertical division of power and status. Finally the *rules* refer to explicit and implicit regulations, norms and conventions that constrain actions and interactions within the activity system. The humans in the system not only use the instruments but also develop them and renew them though this may not always be consciously. Not only do the subjects follow the rules but they also mould and reform them. An activity system is not a homogeneous entity; it is made up of a multiplicity of elements and views, which can be disparate. This can be seen in terms of historical layers an activity system always contains sediments of earlier historical modes as well as buds and shoots of its possible future. These sediments and buds are found in the different components of the system including the tools, models of the subjects, actions and objects.

**Figure 5.5**  
See page 137

**Teaching**



**Consultation through teaching**

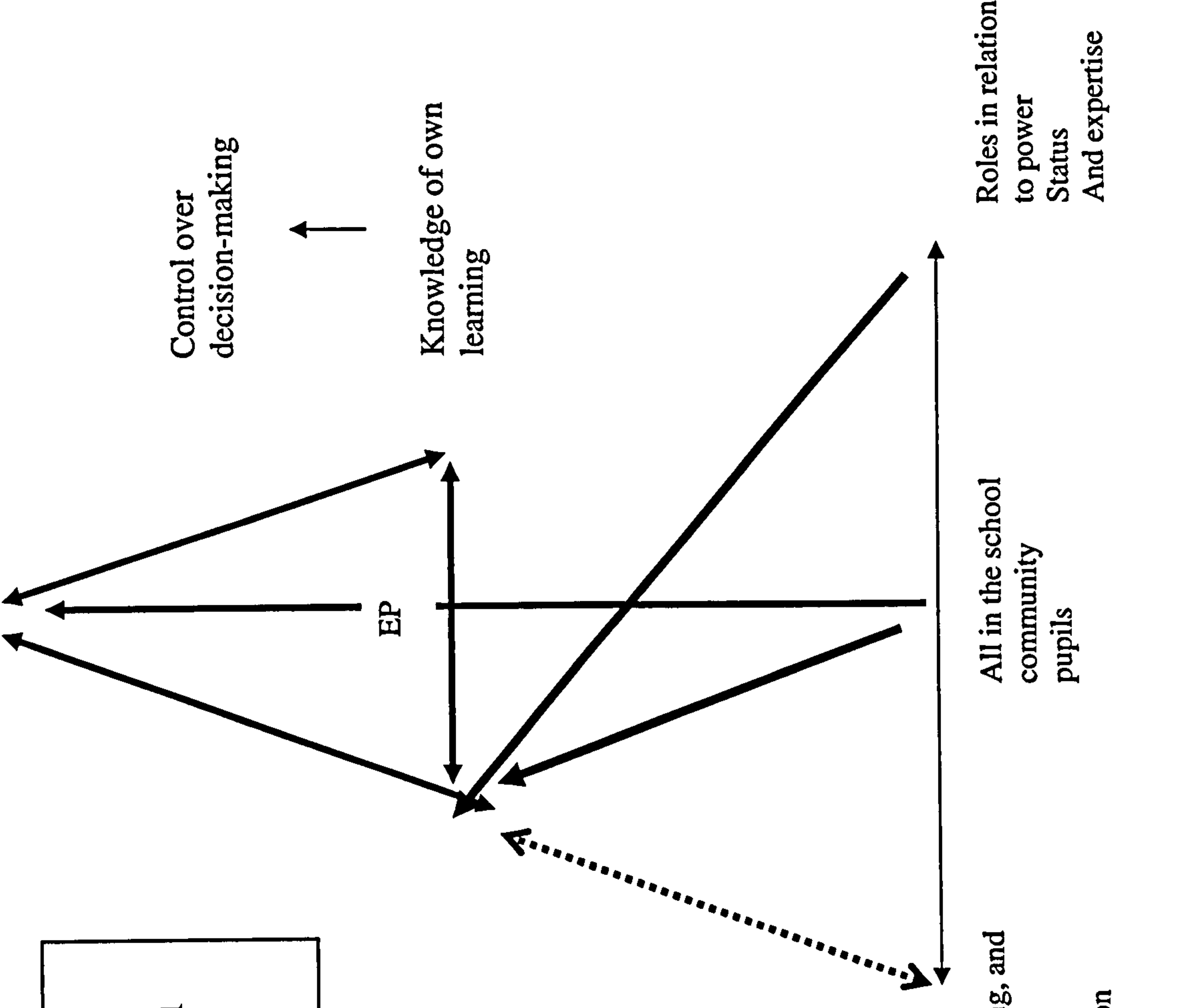




Figure 5.4 on p. 140. An activity system seems a useful way of illuminating the mismatch between my attempts at consulting with pupils about their learning and their own construction of learning.

The system (See Figure 5.5 above: The Research Schools) being considered is that of the learning environment within the research schools. The subjects are the pupils, whose development and understanding of learning could be said to be the main purpose of school. However in looking at the interrelationships within the system, it is clear from the pupil's point of view, that their understanding is that the school teaches them how to construct their learning so that they gain the right information to achieve a high level of attainment. The school community, including the pupils themselves, are organised in supporting and delivering a way of working that drives learning towards measured performance. Wider Government agendas and directives and the overall push to be publicly successful in raising attainment in turn support this. Within this organisation pupils have no impact on the system other than as a means to achieving this goal. The pupils' contribution to decision making in learning is disconnected. Their role and status is defined as separate from those with power and influence over learning. This activity system is represented in the left triangle in figure 23, where the direction of the arrows indicate that pupils only have influence over the production of information so they can impact on higher attainment. They have no input into the construction of learning within school.

In joining this system, I introduced a different object that of having a greater understanding of learning, but the other elements of the system remained the same. I introduced a process, which supported a discussion with pupils about learning, but this process was operating separately from the immediate supporting organisation and the wider social and cultural setting. I therefore created a tension in a well established set of interrelationships which was difficult for pupils and teachers to take on board, and in fact, at best, had no easy routes into the usual ways of working within the school and at worst was undermined by those ways of working. There is no linkage between the current understandings of learning, the school

community with its particular roles and relationships and the attempt to introduce a knowledge of learning. However for some pupils these tensions provided an opportunity to reflect on their own experience of learning and begin to reshape their understanding and their own construction of learning. This in turn began to impact in a small way on their approach to learning within school. This activity system is represented in the right triangle in figure 23 and the 2 way arrows from pupils to knowledge of learning and construction of learning represent a new pupil influence or a new potential for pupil influence within the research schools.

How then does this new potential for pupil participation brought about by consultation through teaching differ from the usual ways in which educational psychologists consult with pupils as part of everyday practice?

## **Implications for the Professional Practice of Educational Psychologists**

### **Pupil consultation within everyday professional practice**

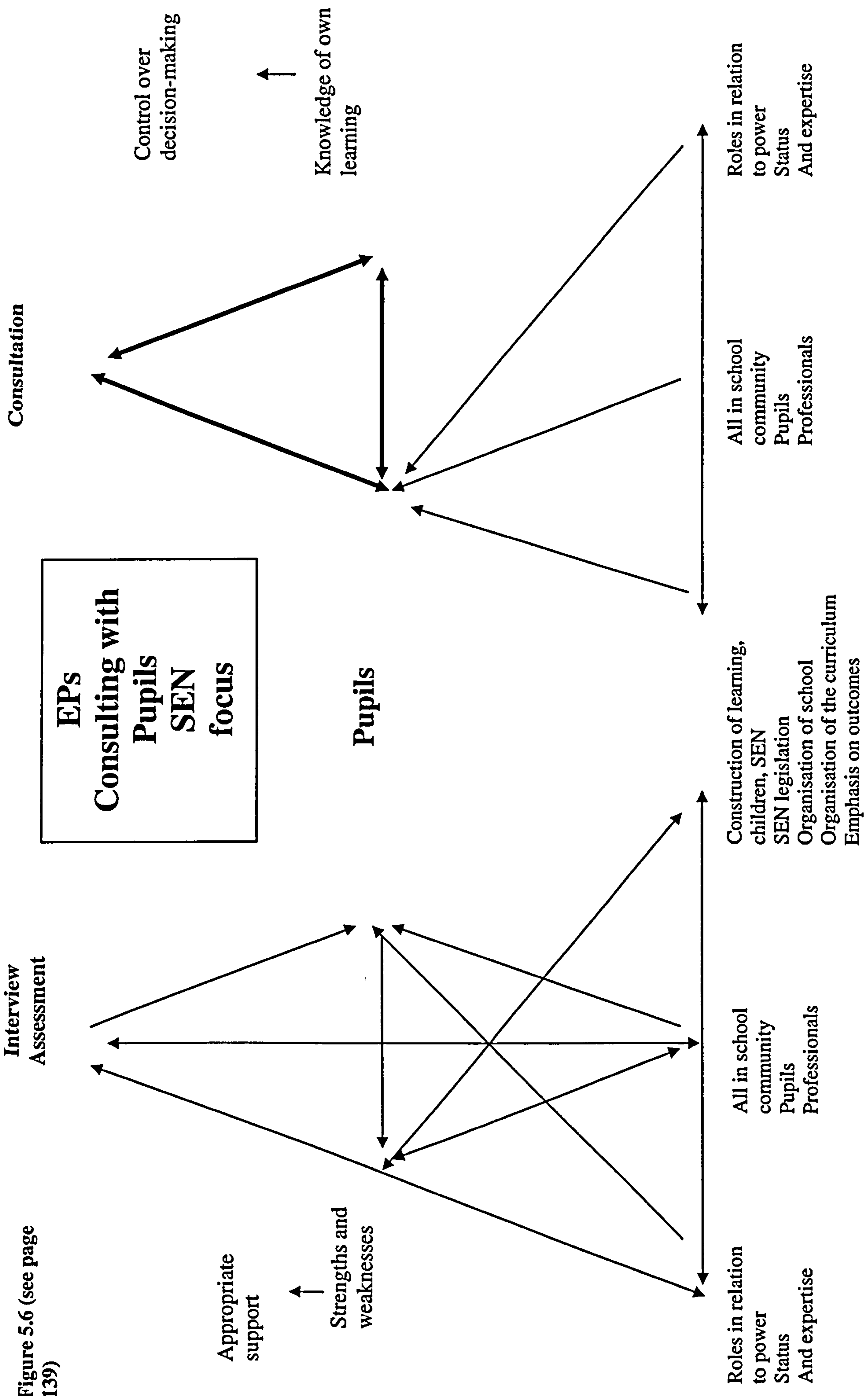
In considering this examination of a way of developing genuine professional consultation with pupils as part of everyday practice, it is useful to consider how consultation with pupils is routinely undertaken and how this process fits into the general expectations for the professional practice of educational psychologists.

Although the preferred practice of educational psychologists might be to work with or on behalf of the broad community of pupils, we are usually located within the frame of special educational needs and pupils with whom schools are experiencing particular difficulties are often those who are drawn to our involvement. There has been much discussion on developing ways of consulting with pupils in this context (see for example Gersch, 1996; Jelly, Fuller and Byers, 2000), however in examining the research information, it seemed useful to consider how the overall system might be impacting on these consultations. I

recognise that the system within the research schools is particular but with there is no evidence to suggest that such an ethos would be unrepresentative. Indeed there is evidence from a wealth of research (Rudduck, Chaplain and Wallace, 1996; Rudduck and Flutter, 2000; Young, 1999) that suggests the agency of the pupil is absent within schools. How then does professional consultation with pupils who are deemed to have special educational needs fit with school systems? Using an activity system is suggestive that particular kinds of consultation with pupils might match well with the school system, however those that want to encourage greater involvement in school processes, particularly in relation to management of their own learning and increased control over decision making, may reflect a similar dislocation as that evidenced in the research. Viewing the overall school system as similar to that of the research schools the added element becomes that of the construction of special educational needs and its entourage of professionals. The subject remains the pupil, in this case singular or a smaller group, and what remains of interest is maintaining appropriate outcomes. The object is then, either to ensure the individual pupil or pupils continue to make sufficient progress to add value to the school or to prevent damage to the overall attainment in the school. As such work with pupils which identifies strengths and weaknesses in order to access appropriate support clearly matches the overall system, however work with pupils which raises questions about their active participation in their learning is disconnected from the overall system. The system is receptive to investigation into deficits and remediation but not into pupil influence. This is set out in Figure 5.6 (see below: EPs consulting with pupils: SEN focus).

Educational psychologists who undertake a range of assessments, however varied in approach or technique, which serve to identify a pupil's or groups of pupils' strengths and weaknesses such that additional resources can be targeted on addressing these difficulties follow a professional practice that is well supported by the overall system. This is shown in the left hand triangle, where there are strong interrelationships between different elements. However

Figure 5.6 (see page 139)



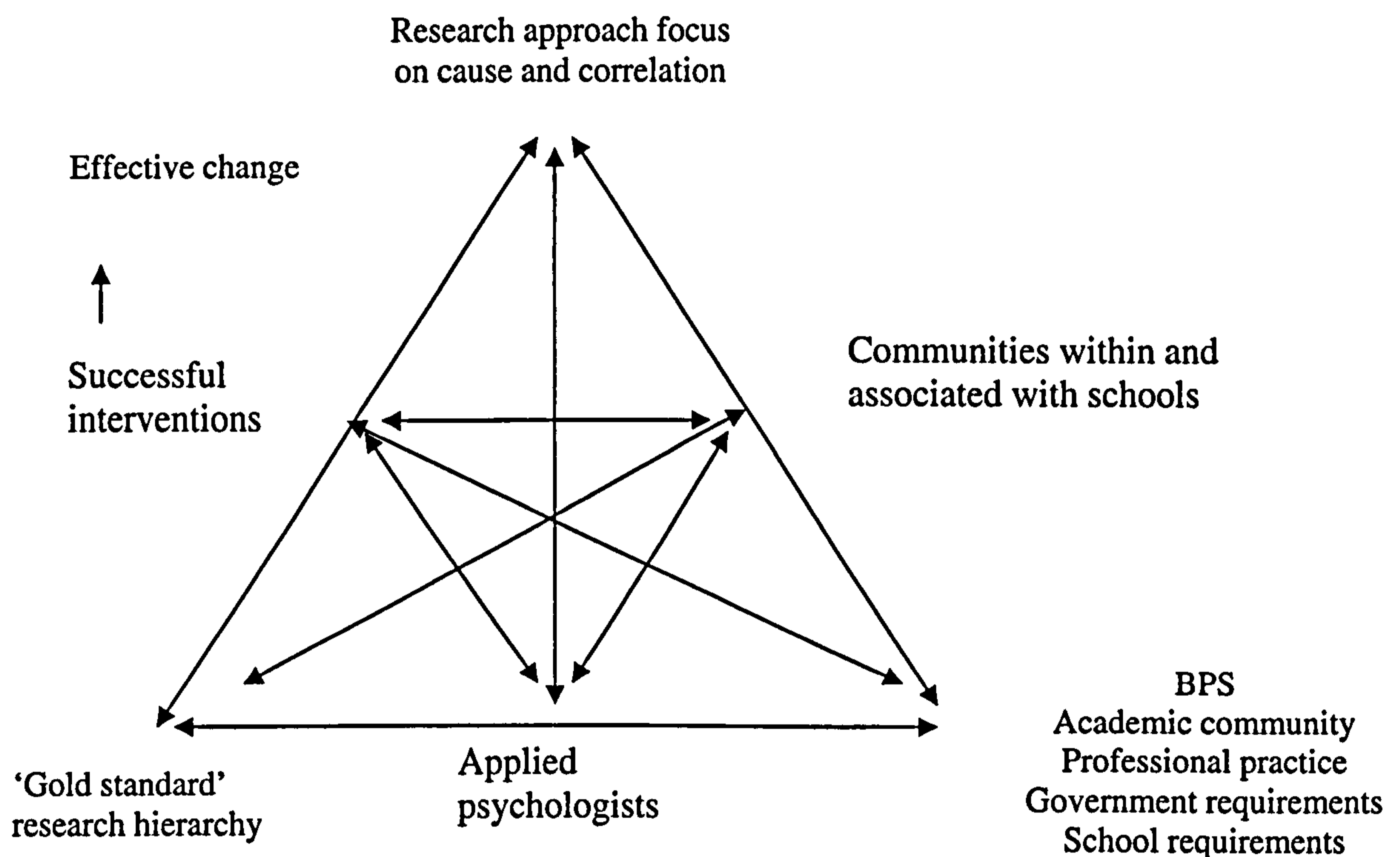
in the right hand triangle, the strong relationship between Pupil (subject), knowledge of own learning (object) and consultation (instrument) is unsupported by the overall school community, its understanding of learning and the power and status given to pupils within this system. Within such a system consulting pupils will be an up hill struggle! In considering consultation with pupils, then analysis using the activity system identifies that the process of working with pupils to establish their strengths and weaknesses, often on the lines of gaining their views about how they get along in school; what they like or dislike, where they feel successful, what they feel they might be able to change and so on, is well embedded in the overall system. The process has little influence for change, as it does not impact on the organisation of the school or the construction of learning within the school. In contrast consulting with pupils about taking greater control of their own learning conflicts with the running of the system but its disconnection makes it difficult for the outcomes to influence the wider setting. Schools as a system then do not generally support this type of consultation with pupils.

## **Consultation with pupils within the psychological community**

How does this approach to consultation with pupils sit within the wider professional and academic community of psychology /Once again in considering evidence based on professional practice, the system that holds most sway is based on 'a gold standard' research hierarchy drawing on positivist models of psychology and might be represented as in Figure 5.7 below. It could be argued that such an approach sits more easily into the school's ongoing system as it looks to treat the system as object of study, and this would include pupils within schools. This approach would be focussed on similar goals to that of the schools themselves whereby they would look to identifying features that lead to more or less successful outcomes; success generally being vested in measurable aspects, for example attainment,

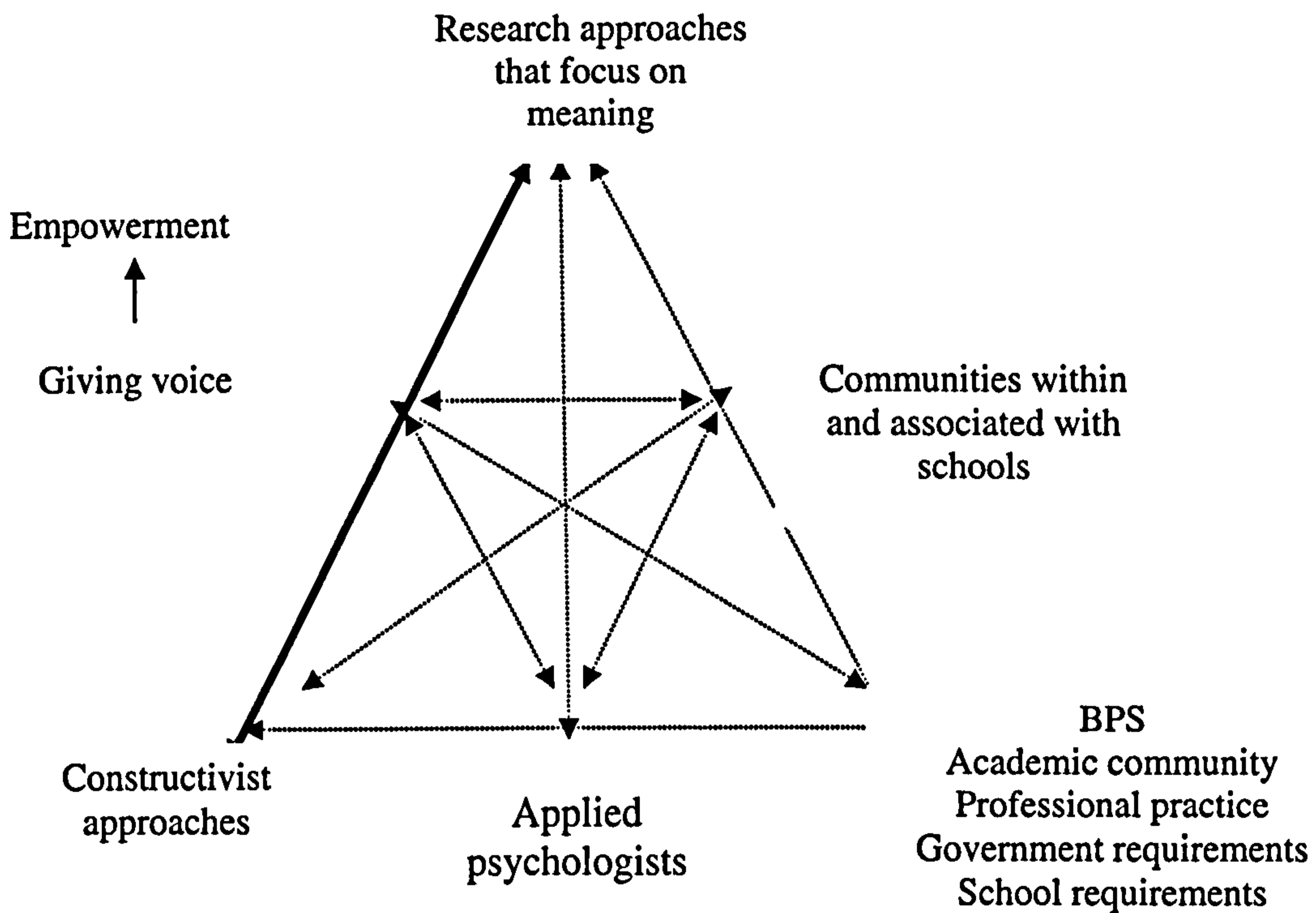
attendance, exclusion and so on. Such research, which may be effective in leading to change in performance, is not a research paradigm that easily takes account of meaning, particularly for pupils who may be absent from decision making and silent within the organisation.

**Figure 5.7: Consultation within the psychological community**



In contrast a research paradigm based on a search for meaning as outlined in the activity system in Figure 5.8 below suggests very weak links between research focussing on an investigation of meaning to any of the supporting communities; schools, professional or academic bodies. So although the research might be able to surface meanings from all members of the school community including that of the pupils, it is less likely to influence overall system change, particularly for those with least power, the pupils.

**Figure 5.8: Psychological research with a focus on meaning**



## Implications for professional practice

What then are the implications for the professional practice of educational psychologist from this research? I would suggest that educational psychologists have worked towards and provided representation for the views of pupils and other young people over many years. They have surfaced and provided a means for these views to be stated and acknowledged. This has been important in arguing for the value of the pupil perspective within any setting or decision making about that pupil. However the impact of this consultation had been limited by the context in which the views were sought. This has impacted in a number of ways. The pupils themselves are unused to and have not developed the skills to respond to questioning about their views. Professionals have sought and received views around the margins of learning. These views about likes and dislikes are important but they do not impact directly on the day to day experience of learning within school. Similarly schools often seek views from pupils in the same arena, confident that these will have little influence on change. This

absence of pupil voice sits well within the wider professional and psychological community who are seeking to establish knowledge of causes, which might then lead to effective change. In doing so schools and with them pupils, are cast into subjects for manipulation. A professional practice that seeks to challenge a number of systems that appear to be successfully working in harmony is difficult, however by providing opportunities to listen to and hear the experience of pupils about their learning, a base is established which begins to offer both possibilities of change and a need to further develop models of consultation.

## **Contexts which Support Consultation with Pupils**

### **Consultation through teaching: a useful model for educational psychologists?**

In considering a model of consultation with pupils through teaching, I have drawn on questions raised by Fielding (2001) in his seminal article 'Beyond the rhetoric of student voice'. I have asked whether the work with the pupils in the research schools has provided a forum for them to speak and be heard, whether it has enabled them to develop their skills to contribute, whether their views are accepted as of value to adults and to each other, and whether their views have impacted on and begun to shape an organisation and culture such that it can begin to provide space, literal and metaphorical, for the pupil voice.

Educational psychologists generally work within the margins of pupil experience. Routinely we work with adults about pupils who are seen to have difficulties; as such we have limited direct experience of the wider pupil body or the wider pupil body of us. Moving into the centre stage of classroom practice introduced a new dimension to our work. How were we to present ourselves and how were we to be viewed? We were very explicit in stating who we were, however much previous research indicates that the title 'educational psychologist' carries a host of understandings, few of which bear any relationship to our role. Initially we were viewed as 'teachers', an expert to deliver 'knowledge', however we clearly did not



conform to usual teacher behaviour, most evidently in that we failed to provide 'content'. As such and as the sessions continued we began to provide a space where some, though not all, felt able to express *views* about *what we were doing* and about *their experience of learning and school*. In the sessions pupils then had a permissible forum for speaking and access to adults who listened. This was still the case in the primary school context, where their class teacher was present, but perhaps most evident in the focus group sessions in the secondary school, without any teaching staff. Teaching the sessions had then begun to develop a culture, within the pupil group and ourselves, of dialogue about their views, which was seen as valuable. This dialogue was supported by its setting within the peer group, such that the focus on collaboration and exchange could be reinforced by the pupils themselves and continue beyond our sessions. In this way we began to foster some understanding that knowledge is constructed and learning is participatory and to scaffold this understanding through each session. Teaching in the classroom, then created some contradictions and turbulence, which Edwards (2001) describes as being the potential for change within the system. The potential that we created did not permeate the whole group, nor did it infuse into the whole school system of the primary schools and even less so the secondary school system, however it brought about a new reflection on learning within a group of pupils which did begin to impact on the way they related to classroom learning. It incidentally rippled into the first year of secondary school by raising questions about ways of teaching; questions that had not been considered previously.

Is consultation through teaching then a useful model for educational psychologists to use for developing pupil participation and pupil empowerment? In terms of the impact of the work of educational psychologists on the wider pupil body, I would say yes. This way of working encouraged dialogue with and between pupils about their school experience. It is hard to imagine how much richer the information gained from the pupils was than the access to 'pupils' views' usually possible with the normal working day of an educational psychologist. Despite the contextual constraints, pupils were working within the usual classrooms, with

their classmates and class teacher, they provided us with real insight into their understanding of learning and experience of school life. What is most evident is the need to work with the current understandings and expectations of staff and pupils and to acknowledge that if any change is to be brought about then this must work from these beliefs. Working within the usual classroom setting was then a fruitful way of introducing consultation.

The dialogue did bring about a reconstruction of their understanding of learning for some pupils. As such those pupils had access to enhanced personal resources to manage their own learning: however this was not the case for all pupils. As Fielding (2001) identified the development of skills to support dialogue and democratic discussion is often absent within schools. The argument has been that pupils 'lack the capacity' to contribute meaningfully and effectively. This argument is increasingly suspect as more evidence emerges which demonstrates how articulate pupils are about their experience (for example Burke and Grosvenor, 2002), however it remains a pervasive discourse and was clearly present within the research schools. I would even suggest that it was an accepted culture between teacher and pupil that the teacher was the director. In this context then consultation through teaching is restricted by the pupils' limited opportunity to develop and practice participatory skills. I would also argue that teaching classes provided new insight for the teaching staff who were present at the sessions, as it raised questions about the understanding they had of their own pupils and their experience of learning. Most powerfully it revealed information to us as psychologists about the culture of the schools in which we worked and how this disempowers pupils and how we might act to create turbulence for points of change within the system.

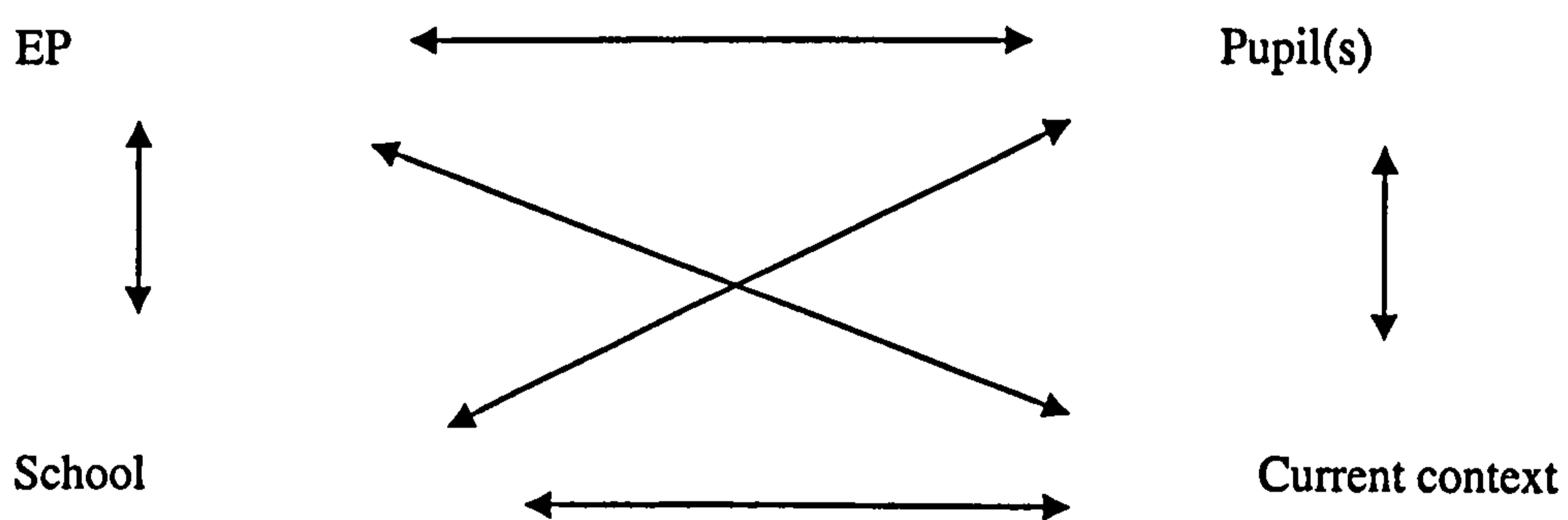
## **A new model for consultation?**

The research seemed to suggest that both schools and educational psychologists have constructed organisations and practices that collaborate to inhibit pupil participation. A new model for pupil participation needs to take account of and examine this implicit collaboration.

Any model of consultation for professional practice needs to reflect the pupils' knowledge of and access to participation, the ethos, culture and organisation of the school community where the pupil is and the current context for that pupil or pupils. This could be represented as shown in Figure 5.9 below. So in consulting with pupils there would be a need to consider or map out:

- What experience does the pupil or pupils have about contributing to decision making about learning: to whom do pupils speak, about what and how? How are skills for participation developed and practiced, what are the outcomes?

**Figure 5.9: Interactions in consultation**



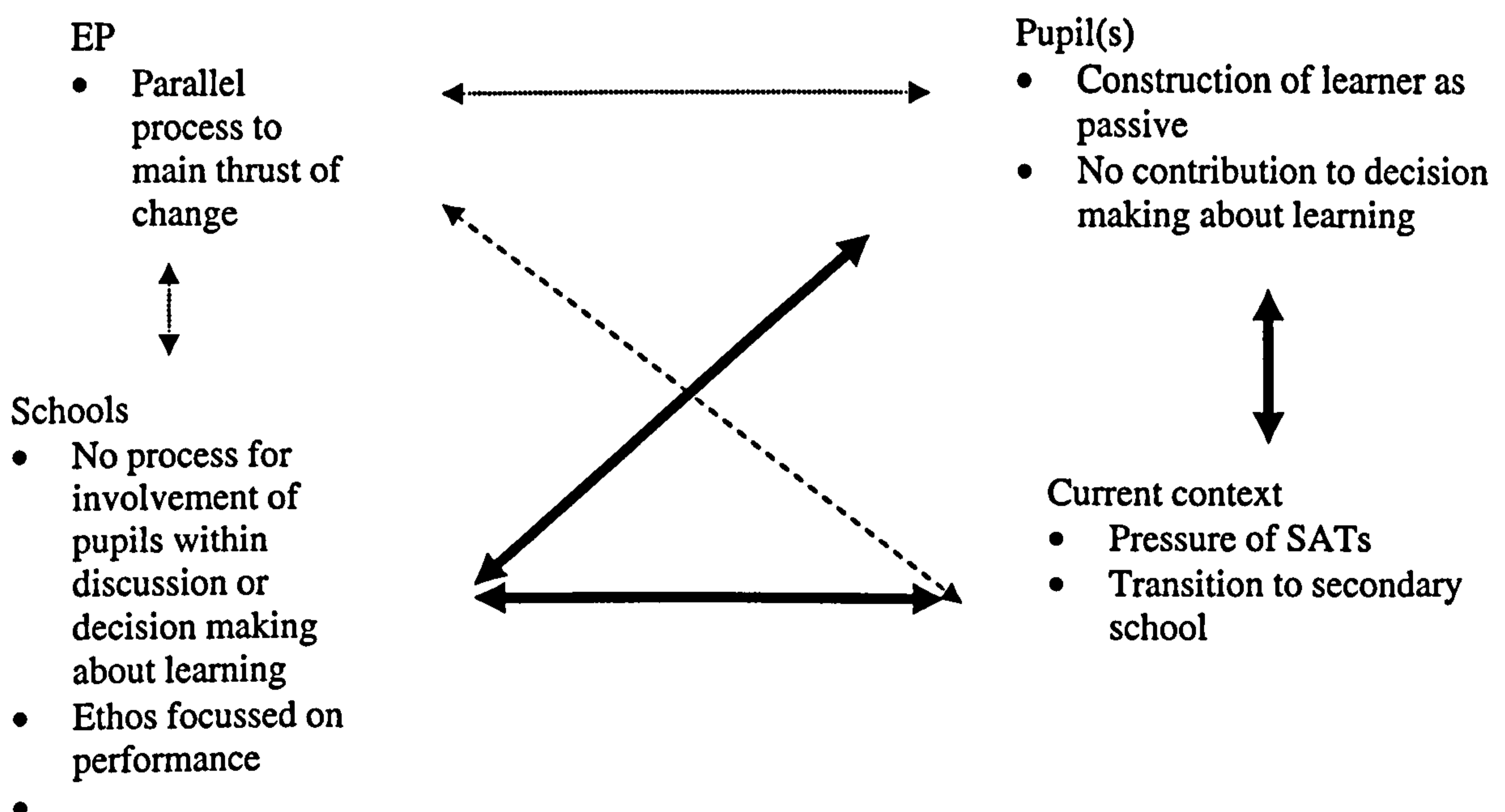
- What is the current context for that pupil or pupils: what is impacting on the pupils as a group, as individuals?
- How has the school constructed pupil participation: who listens, to whom and why? What are the systems and spaces for participation? What is the history and culture about pupil participation?
- What influences do these elements have on each other. Where is power and status vested. How is change brought about?
- How is the EP constructed? What constructions of pupils? Of pupil participation does the EP bring?

In the case of this research:

- Pupils had very limited or no experience of contributing to decision making about learning. They spoke about individual or group activities with teachers, which were largely on the lines of ‘news’;
- The current context of SATs and the forthcoming move and experience of the move focussed them on social and personal rather than learning needs;
- The schools did not involve pupils in discussion or decision making about learning;
- The schools had a powerful historical and cultural influence over the pupils such that they had difficulty accessing discussions or information about their own learning;
- Pupils had no influence on their school settings or the process of transfer;
- The EP had limited knowledge of or influence on the whole school system, or the process of transfer but did engage with some pupils about their understandings of their own learning.

This could be represented as in Figure 5.10 below, where the heavy solid black lines, in contrast to the weaker dashed link, indicate the strength of influence.

**Figure 5.10: Interactions in the research schools**



There is a need to acknowledge that influencing change is difficult, however despite the constraints within the system, the research process has been illuminating. It has examined the complexity of setting up a process of consultation through teaching with pupils and questioned the value of simply seeking pupils' views without examining the context in which these views are surfaced. It has drawn attention to the importance of identifying issues of current concern to the pupils as a major factor when considering work about participation. It suggests that although there were limitations in the developments that occurred, working directly with groups of pupils is a much more powerful way of accessing information with pupils about their experience of school and is likely to produce much more useful professional practice in terms of understanding how developments might be brought about for and by pupils. It also highlighted the strength of the set of current systems that work against accessing the pupil voice, and that the school system and professional system are well matched in silencing pupils.

Drawing on this analysis and reflecting on the application of activity theory to illuminate the mismatches in the outcomes of the research, I would propose a possible model for developing pupil empowerment and participation, which is based on activity theory.

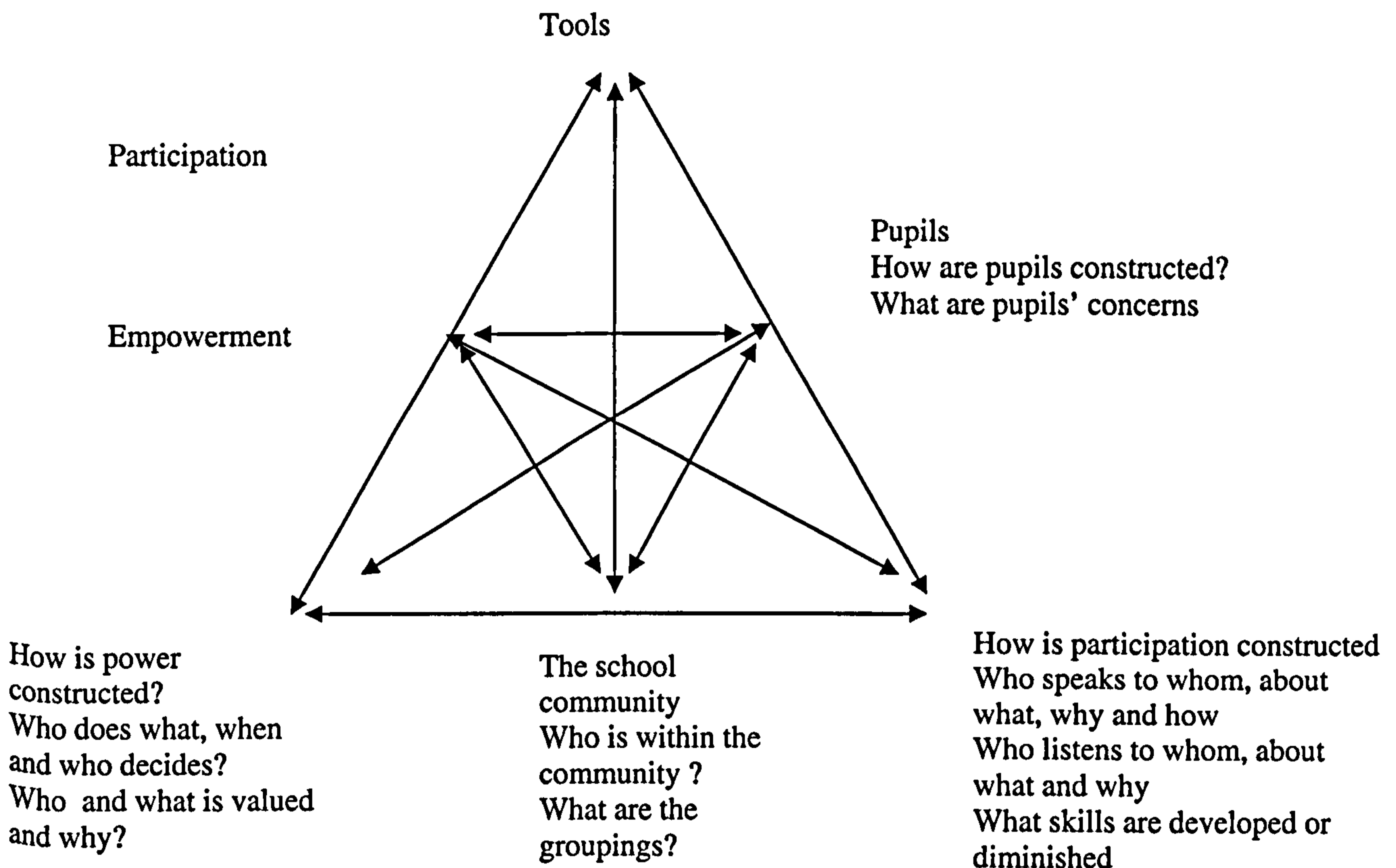
## **A model for Pupil Participation and Empowerment**

The model (see figure 5.11) outlined below is a possible way in which educational psychologists might be able to consider a whole school organisation, investigate its attitude and approach to pupil participation and on this basis decide what tools to use and in what part of the subsystem to create turbulence that may bring about change.

Using the model above to consider the subsystems within the whole activity system could enable an educational psychologist to decide what tools to use and at which point so that this

action might be directed towards points of turbulence which can act as points for systemic adaptation or expansive learning. This is to acknowledge that a whole range of tools is

**Figure 5.11: A model for educational psychologists when consulting with pupils based on 'Activity Theory'.**



available to educational psychologists (and other colleagues) but their usefulness will be related to their relationship within the whole system. It may be that teaching as a way of consulting with pupils can create 'turbulence' towards change, however it may be that another tool would be likely to create greater disturbance; in Freire's (1972) words to create problematization.

# Reflections on the Research

## The origins

I came to this study from a deep commitment to hearing the voice of children and young people but a profound discomfort with my ability to genuinely access those views and experiences. I feel that professionals like myself struggle to talk with children and young people and often find themselves providing adult chosen and directed ways for children and young people to 'speak'. In essence there is a continual tension between our responsibility to work on behalf of children and young people and our fear that this will enable them to go beyond our control. In managing this tension we frequently provide children and young people with an impossible task: one in which adults appear to be consulting them, but one that they know to be a charade. In undertaking this study I was then searching for a new way of holding a conversation with children and young people, aware of the inherent difficulties within this search. I was sustained throughout by the voices of the pupils with whom I worked and my desire to ensure those voices were heard.

## The study

Successful professional development involves a willingness to accept challenge, in effect to take risks. In exploring a different way of consulting with pupils through teaching, this research was a professional challenge in a number of ways. In moving my professional practice into the classroom I was exposing myself to managing the classroom environment alongside seeking the views of pupils. It was an arena, which was open to exploitation by all the participants and to public criticism. There were times when the study seemed foolhardy. I argued that consultation into the classroom drew on models of practice commonly employed by educational psychologists (see Wagner, 2000), in which consultation, ideally, is an enabling process which draws on the knowledge and strengths of the consultee to effect

successful change. I saw the links in this process to teaching approaches, which are based on constructivist models. As with consultation, pupils are actively involved in making sense of the world, in constructing knowledge for themselves. The emphasis is less on putting in information and more on drawing out new knowledge and understanding. Carnell and Lodge (2002) argued that making learning visible is crucial to enhancing learning. However in moving into the classroom as educational psychologists turned teacher-researcher, there arose a series of tensions, which highlighted a set of different understandings and experiences. These worked against using a process of consultation within the classroom.

Within schools as much as teaching is about relationships, it is also about control. As proxy teachers we brought and entered a school culture in which we needed to be and to be seen as in control. Although we attempted to introduce a different way of working and behaving and from the responses of the pupils, both positive and negative, we were largely successful in this; we remained 'adults with power'. In this sense pupils permitted us access to their school experience only so far as they viewed this to be safe or within accepted conventions.

Consultation was then bounded by the nature of permitted dialogue in the school. In fact, pupils checked with us, on occasions, to clarify the receiving audience for their information. In any consultation, there are overtly and covertly agreed rules of disclosure and personally established boundaries, which bound the dialogue. It is also difficult to escape from the imbalance of power, more laying in the hands of the consultant than consultee. Within the school and classroom, however, 'safe' dialogue is even more restricted and the power relationship clearly in evidence. In this context, real consultation, as in a conversational enquiry between equals, is very difficult to achieve.

Alongside this, we worked within class groups. Although there may be some safety in known peers, in that relationships and expectations have already been established, it is also the case that individuals will already have known roles and behaviours, which they need to show.



These roles and behaviours may serve to overemphasise some views and to further silence others.

As the school contexts, in which we worked, were essentially not ones that fostered dialogue between pupils and teachers about learning, the pupils had few 'school' skills to draw on to offer their views, and possibly less confidence that their views would be of sufficient value to be taken account of. The pupils' experience was one of 'taking in' information and when we asked them to think in a different way they found it difficult to interpret and to work out how to respond.

Schools then are conforming and controlling institutions, and although we attempted to step outside of our agenda of special educational needs and assessment, the pupils remained very much part of the cultural pattern established within the school, and beyond. However, I would argue that, even given these limiting factors, the pupils did offer a meaningful and illuminating commentary on their experience of school through the series of teaching sessions. In a small way, the sessions provided an opportunity for the beginnings of a dialogue about learning, which had not taken place within those classrooms previously.

## **The process**

Attempting to critically reflect on my research process, I recognised feelings of self-exposure, self doubt, commitment and achievement. As Clough (1995) says

'we do not come innocent to a task or situation of events; rather we wilfully situate those events not merely in the institutional meanings which our profession provides but also, and in the same moment, we constitute them as expressions of ourselves.

Inevitably, the traces of our own psychic and social history drive us.' (p. 138)

In this sense I needed to acknowledge that in undertaking the research, initial questions changed and evolved as I became involved with the pupils. At one time or another, I found it hard to maintain focus on the research questions of the study and became more engaged with

the emerging information from working with the pupils. This seems to me to reflect both the excitement and exasperation of researching everyday professional practice; the plan is a process of continual review. I found it hard to fit the study back into the original research outline and in many ways allowed the research to grow into new explorations. I was then exposed to doubt about the outcomes of the study, alongside a sense of achievement of having begun to form some emerging theories about pupils' understanding of learning and ways of consulting with pupils. I was enabled to continue with this struggle by referring to Schon's (1996) view of the situations in which professionals work as 'messes'.

## **The journey**

Reflecting on the journey undertaken during this research, I began to ask myself how had I addressed the many questions I had raised before carrying out the study itself?

- Were the pupils more able to actively contribute to plans for developing their own learning and learning environment?
- Did the process of research reflect genuine consultation?
- Did I offer the pupils access to psychology?
- Had I challenged the current dominant constructions of pupils and learning, which I had argued inhibited pupil empowerment and pupil participation?

## **Pupils' Active contribution to their own learning**

Did the pupils gain more agency in the sense of 'being able to control events rather than events or people always determining what you do or who you are' (Davies, 1999a p.20). I found it hard to see that the pupils did gain any feeling of control within their school setting and in the move into secondary school they expressed a significant reduction in their sense of control. However for some pupils there was a beginning of personal questioning about their

own understandings of learning and this seems to me to reflect a possibility of bringing transparency to the classroom environment which would reflect Rudduck's view that

'it is the right of teachers and students to understand what they are doing and why they are doing it, to recognise the areas where they can, together, influence and improve the experience of learning and teaching'. (1991, p.21)

and a movement towards empowerment as described in Hayes (2002), as pupils are involved in making choices about their own personal ways of learning. For individual pupils then they began to stand out from the particular social and cultural practices enacted in their school.

## Giving psychology to pupils

I proposed that this research process was a way of sharing psychology with pupils with the aim of co-constructing new meanings. I represented this as model 3 in fig (see p.49). Did this happen? I offered differing approaches about ways of learning and opportunities to experiment with these approaches within the social context of the classroom. I had specifically drawn upon approaches that I saw as more accessible to pupils and hence the choice of information about learning styles, mind mapping, visualisation and so on. This provided the pupils with other ways of understanding and developing their own learning. For some pupils these alternatives were not taken up but others began to explore these other constructions and develop a different understanding of learning. I would argue that I drew on a model from Vygotsky (1978) to share psychology with the pupils. This model suggests our understanding of the world is based on our activity within it, which gradually through social mediation, most particularly language, becomes internalized as our way of making sense. In other words we create a mental model that becomes our reality. In making approaches to learning explicit, it was possible for some pupils to begin to reconstruct their understanding of their own learning

## Did the process offer genuine consultation?

The main features of the consultation process commonly employed by educational psychologists (Wagner,2000) are that

- it is a problem solving process;
- it is indirect in service delivery. In other words the most significant work is undertaken with the teacher or care giver rather than the client;
- there is a collaborative process between consultant and consultee;
- the relationship between consultant and consultee is voluntary and confidential;
- it is task orientated and focuses on work related needs of client.

In this model then the expectation is that the consultant and consultee will 'talk over' or 'talk about' the pupil, rather than with the pupil. This problem focused model then is perhaps limited in relation to genuine consultation with pupils. In assuming a problem it leads educational psychologists back into a relationship with pupils, which is based on adult identified difficulties rather than genuine dialogue about the pupil's own experience. In considering whether this research process enabled genuine consultation it might be more appropriate to draw on alternative models such as that of the 'Ladder of Pupil Participation' (see figure 2.2. p. 34) where there were elements within the research process from all the sections of the ladder. So the pupils did not direct the planning of or activities within the lessons but they were asked to actively and explicitly comment on them and they were asked to actively put forward their views about the management of the move from primary to secondary school. In this sense there was good match to Meighan's (1998) consultative curriculum (see p. 35 literature review). This raises some questions about models of consultation currently influencing the practice of educational psychologists. These models tend to be located within a problem, or solution orientated framework, whereas consultation

with pupils may be about a fostering a democratic dialogue that might enable educational psychologists to become revolutionary educators (Freire, 1972).

## **Did I challenge current constructions of pupils and learning?**

According to Foucault (1970) discourses are ways of understanding the world, which develop through language and become socially acceptable 'truths'. As such these discourses invade and shape our everyday experiences such that they become 'taken for granted': the background to life. These discourses maintain and reproduce power relations, which privilege some knowledge above that of the 'other'. School, it could be argued, is as a particular institution which sets out to mould individuals into a following an already agreed set of norms with the justification that it is providing access to desired knowledge within the disciplined and caring environment required by children and young people. Professionals interacting with the institution of school then are required to act in a way that maintains those agreed norms and practices. Considering consultation with pupils within these discourses draws attention to the inherent difficulties in this activity, however it also poses a disturbance which reflect 'slippage' between accepted social practices and actual social practices which represent the essential fragility and the complex interplay between what replicates the same process and what transforms it (Foucault, 1970). This slippage I examined further by drawing on activity theory, which highlighted the network of rules, understandings, and systems, which were maintaining current practice in relation to pupil participation both within schools and within the professional practice of educational psychologists. In so doing I hope that this provides an opportunity for turbulence within these systems. I recognise that I have barely begun to touch upon these hugely complex issues, but by at least illuminating them, I hope that I have drawn attention to their impact on professional practice.

From this analysis I think that the most defining moment in the research process was the recognition that my own professional commitment to consulting with pupils was embedded in

a discourse of being advocate for pupils when in effect it was maintaining a system of silencing pupils.

## **Limitations and next steps**

Clearly this study was sited in a singular context and the pupils' understanding of learning and their experience of school will be particular to that context. In this sense the research was a way of seeking to co-construct change that was specific and local rather than general and universal (Gameson, Rhydderch, Ellis and Carroll, 2003 ). It attempted to build upon a cycle of critical reflection arising from my work about consulting with pupils, which could feed back into my own practice and that of other educational psychologists. In so doing I have raised questions for myself about the models of consultation upon which we commonly draw as educational psychologists. I find that our model of consultation separates us from pupils. On the one hand this has been a strength as it seeks to distinguish the pupil from the problem, on the other hand it disables pupils from presenting their story directly. Furthermore it assumes there is a problem to solved rather than seeking more wholesale development and change. It fails to set up a process, which engages both professionals and pupils in an ongoing dialogue. In looking then at the next steps that might develop from this research, I would want to consider a process of consultation with pupils that begins to explore their own constructions of pupil participation and how these do or do not support pupils contribution and ownership of their own learning environment. I think it would be interesting to work together with pupils to look at the activity system outlined in figure 5.11 (see p. 155) and consider with them the questions raised within the system. In this way, I would hope to surface the points of turbulence as pupils themselves identify them. Overall the next step would be a research project about working with professionals, which was within the control of the pupils.

# **Validation or is this Just What I Think?**

The preceding discussion raises a need for a consideration of what is usually termed 'the validity' of my research and subsequent interpretations. On the surface my analysis is just that; mine and there should and will be different interpretations to the research material. This would be the case whether I had undertaken a quantitative or qualitative study, but how have I judged the quality of my research? Cresswell and Miller (2000) recommend that qualitative researchers elucidate their analytical approach and engage in verification techniques to demonstrate how themes, discourses or theories were identified. Cresswell (1998) suggests a number of techniques, which should be undertaken. These are covered by Yardley's (2000) suggestion of three broad principles for assessing the quality of qualitative research, which I have used to consider my research.

## **Sensitivity to context**

There are a number of different ways in which sensitivity can be established, which include an awareness of the existing literature, the degree to which the study is sensitive to the data itself, attention to the socio-cultural context in which the research was undertaken and awareness of the relationship between the researchers and the participants.

## **Existing Literature**

The focus of this study drew on a wide range of literature bases as I attempted to draw together the key constructions that I see as influential in the practice of educational psychology. Inevitably, in this process, I have been particular in my choice of references and have developed a presentation, which is related to my own understandings of the constructions around the professional practice of educational psychology. They derive from a social constructionist perspective. They are based on both extensive work as a practitioner and

a series of other studies, which particularly focussed on professional consultation with children and young people.(See for example Hobbs, Todd and Taylor, 2000). I therefore think that I have drawn on the developing understandings of work relating to both professional consultation with children and young people and pupil participation. This, I also feel, represents a commitment to this area of work.

## **Sensitivity to the data**

The research produced an extensive amount of material. Some of this was full transcriptions of interviews with groups of pupils, however much of the other material was that derived from direct work with pupils. The latter was part of an ongoing series of activities, which explored with them different ways of learning. Each piece was both a snapshot and an example, so at one and the same time it was 'evidence' but also transient in that it was part of a continuing process. In analysis then the material may have achieved a weightiness that was not intended in the original production. I may well have highlighted a passing thought or chosen to focus on an activity, which was of little importance to the participant or participants. However in searching for codes, categories, themes and emerging theories, I have returned to the material over and over again. I feel I have a high level of familiarity with it. It was also part of the research process to reflect on the information that was gained at each session such that this informed my thinking for the next and following sessions and was subject to initial analysis. In this sense the data has been analysed both in detail and alongside the undertaking of the research. This analysis has been done in conjunction with my professional colleague, the pupils themselves and teacher colleagues, although no participant has had full access to all the data. Parts of the material have been drawn on in subsequent related work and in presentations to colleagues. Overall I feel I have an extensive knowledge of the material and am aware of my limitations in coming to an understanding of it.



## **Attention to socio-cultural context**

Context was all important within this research. The key thesis of the work was examining another way of finding a voice for pupils. From professional practice and from reading and research, I am very aware of how pupils are situated within schools. It is hard to reduce the power differentials between adults and pupils in schools, however introducing the research process into a familiar context for pupils and explaining it as fully as possible to them, I hope the process was more transparent. The difficulties and misunderstandings that happened along the way in the research are fully outlined in an earlier chapter (methodology), as much as this represents the story of the research, it also represents an awareness of context. This emphasis on the experience of pupils and their opportunity to represent this experience was most evident following transfer to secondary school, where it was almost impossible to consider anything with them other than their experience of change.

## **Relationship of researcher to participant**

As an adult working within schools, there is always a difficulty in trying to establish a relationship, which is not that of teacher-pupil. Indeed for the pupils we worked with, I think it was a confusion in their relationship with us. We were clear we were not teachers, though working in a lesson time. We were also clear about what we were trying to do and that we wanted feedback on the sessions. This was unusual for the pupils and they responded in different ways. Their comments would suggest that we were different from teachers; this had both negative and positive connotations. The range of responses we received from all the groups and within the groups would suggest that variability and honesty was encouraged. We also received a good response from a request for volunteers to join focus groups within the secondary school. I shall hang on to the comment that 'psychologists are cool'.

## **Commitment, rigour, transparency and coherence**

At all stages of the research I have attempted to be both thorough and transparent. This applies to planning, undertaking and analysing the material. However I recognize that throughout the research there have been a number of disordered arrangements, so that a high degree of flexibility has been a theme. This reflects the initial action research model of plan-do-review. It also reflects the experience of life in schools, which do not and cannot conform to expectations at all times. I have adhered to a process that has presented all the information and material as clearly as possible and the way in which this material has been managed and analysed. I think it would be fair to say that the outcomes of the research were a surprise; although I had 'hunches' about pupils' understandings of learning, their experience of school and school transfer, I had no expectation of much of the information that arose from the research. In this sense the emerging categories were derived directly from the data and not donated. All the material has been carefully reviewed and revisited many times. I have searched for and explored differences and contradictions. In the end the key discourses that have emerged seem to me to reflect the deep experience of the pupils as revealed to me.

## **Impact and Importance**

Much of the research confirms what others have said. In this sense it would be possible to argue that the information is not new, however it adds to a growing picture, which hopefully will begin to funnel the focus of education on to the experience of pupils and their competence in expressing their views about this experience. The more important aspect of the research is the attempt to consider how pupil consultation sits within the context of schools and raise the question of whether current professional practice is colluding with schools, however unwillingly and unknowingly, in ways that preserve the status quo and the current absence of pupils in decision making. In essence to ask questions about working at the margins of the system, in allowed spaces. Are educational psychologists occupying the same

marginalized and silent place within schools as pupils? In raising this question I then suggest that models of child or pupil participation are insufficient as tools to examine or change current practice. They are useful as templates, but we need to develop a more complex model of analysis to really encourage and develop pupil consultation. The beginning of this model is outlined and the usefulness of applying activity theory to the analysis is highlighted.

## Concluding Comments

In considering the outcomes of the research, I am struck by a series of mismatches between the espoused models of pupil participation and the reality of pupils' involvement in decision-making in their own learning and in the schools where this learning takes place. Fielding (2001) debated whether we should be doubtful or optimistic about our intention to let the student voice be heard. Certainly the outcomes from 'The school I'd like' (Grosvenor and Burke, 2003) would lead the reader to lean strongly toward doubt. In this context, then it may seem strange to choose teaching as a way of consulting with pupils about their learning and about my professional practice as an educational psychologist. However, I was aware of profound unease about current practices of consulting with children and young people within educational psychology. This unease has led to a re-examination of much of our work in relation to the children and young people on whose behalf we work. This research was then a part of this reflection and reworking of practice. Pupils' absence of opportunity to develop and use the skills of democratic decision making applies equally to the one on one conversations that educational psychologists regularly conduct. The difficulties of genuine consultation with pupils are evidenced in the majority of those meetings. By moving into the everyday environment of the school and classroom, this allowed for the possibility of exploring the wide range of pupils' experience of learning in school and the opportunity to provide pupils with tools for the further independent exploration. The context for learning,

as Rudduck and Flutter (2000) have previously identified, mitigates against establishing a process for genuine consultation with pupils. The overriding discourse that ran through the analysis of the research echoes this finding; the discourse of pupil resignation. Within a context then that lacks procedures and processes for actively engaging pupils in decisions about their own learning, the introduction of teaching approaches that raise such questions resulted in uncertainty. However the questions did begin to provide some of the pupils with the opportunity to explore and comment on their experience of both learning and school life. As professionals located outside the school, but working within the usual classroom setting we provided alternative and complimentary approaches to classroom learning. Within the established conditions of learning, we began a conversation about learning itself rather than the contents of learning. We did offer those pupils direct access to psychology, which they could decide to explore, set on one side or discard. I would argue that the sessions provided the pupils with the option of developing their knowledge of their own learning.

What we had set out to explore was a method of consulting with pupils which maximised their opportunity for participation within that process. What was surprising, and to some extent shocking, was the absence of any pupil participation in the process of their own learning. All four schools did seek to listen to pupils, including the introduction of Schools Councils in two of them, however the focus for listening was outside the classroom. The focus was not on discussing learning but on peripheral elements of the school organisation, such as lunchtimes or access to playground space. This is not to devalue those discussions, which are often central to pupils' school lives, but to emphasise that talk about teaching and learning is covertly forbidden. The models of participation, which are being promoted, are not about learning. In the context of these schools, pupil participation was restricted to arenas outside the main purposes of school; they were 'curriculum free'. We introduced or attempted to introduce a model of participation, which directly focussed on the way in learning takes place. As such the sessions we delivered posed a challenge to all- teachers,

pupils and ourselves. Perhaps they even acted as a point of turbulence in the 'Activity Systems' within the schools.

In many ways the strong focus in the work of psychologists on acting as an advocate for children and seeking the views of children has matched the model of participation that is current in schools. In seeking views about dislikes and likes of school life there is a feeling of surfacing their perspective, however in reality this focus remains within the permissible area of contribution and does not seek to explore the pupil's understandings of their own experience of school and learning . This research, I would suggest, in working with pupils using a teaching approach to consult them about their understanding of their own learning did engage them in a discussion about these deeper structures of school experience. Then it was possible to access this experience. From the outcomes of the research, I have outlined a possible model for educational psychologists, which more fully takes account of the complexity of the organisation of schools and the pupils' position within that organisation. The model does not suggest that using teaching as a method of consultation will necessarily be useful. The model rather proposes that there might be a range of tools available to educational psychologists, the appropriate use of which will relate to the whole 'activity system' of any given setting. It may be that this model of professional practice for consulting with pupils has the potential to provide a new community of practice based on a dialogic form of engagement (Fielding, 2001) where 'children and adults combine power and create new forms of wisdom when they explore learning together' (Lincoln, 1995).

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# Appendices

## **Appendix 1**

### **Initial Proposal presented to Primary Schools**

## **PROPOSAL**

Helping pupils to know how they learn most effectively and how to apply this knowledge to future learning.

### **AIMS**

- to raise pupils' awareness of different learning styles and approaches.
- to help pupils' reflect on their own learning styles and approaches.
- to introduce pupils to a range of alternative learning styles and approaches.
- to help pupils apply their knowledge of their own learning and their learning approaches.
- to undertake this in an experiential/creative way.
- to share information with teaching staff.
- to review and evaluate the impact of the above at end of primary school and following transfer to secondary School.

### **Target Group:**

- Year 6 pupils in 3 Primary Schools that are part of a pyramid feeding one secondary school.

### **Planned Actions**

- A series of 3 sessions with each year 6 group, (number to be agreed with each school) to consider pupils' knowledge of their own learning, introduce range of other approaches and plan next steps.
- 1 x 1 session towards the end of summer term with each year 6 group to review pupils' action plans and outcomes.
- 1 x 1 session with groups of pupils in Year 7, who have been part of the year 6 programme, to consider changes that have taken place since joining secondary schools.

### **Logistics**

- Programme will involve 2 educational psychologists
- Programme will take place as follows:

3 sessions	-	First half of Spring Term 2002
1 session	-	Late Summer Term 2002
1 session	-	End Autumn Term 2002
- Group size and timing to be agreed with school
- Method for seeking parental and pupil permission to be agreed.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Letter to primary Schools with outline plan**

**14<sup>th</sup> December 2001**

**Dear**

**Helping pupils to know how they learn most effectively and how to apply this knowledge to future learning**

Following on from our previous proposal (see attached for reference), an overview of each session is outlined below:

**3 sessions in the Spring Term (17<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> January and 7<sup>th</sup> February all at )**

Prior to the sessions

**Please would you give each pupil one of the enclosed letters. The letter briefly explains what the sessions are about. The letter is deliberately ‘silly’, as we will use it in the 1<sup>st</sup> session as a way of looking at how we remember information.**

Session 1 (17<sup>th</sup> January)

**Aims**

- To introduce ourselves and enable the pupils to introduce themselves
- To present the overall aims and an outline of the sessions
- To introduce the notion of auditory, visual and kinaesthetic learning styles with a focus on auditory in this session.

**Plan**

- Introductions
- Establishing ground rules
- Outlining the aims of the sessions
- Discussing our letter to the class and ways of remembering information
- Using ‘learning to ride a bike’ as a way of identifying the range of skills and knowledge involved in learning

Session 2 (31<sup>st</sup> January)

**Aims**

- To introduce and practice mind mapping
- To focus on visual learning styles

**Plan**

- Introduce and demonstrate mind mapping using some of the material produced from the ‘learning to ride a bike’ activity
- Develop and practice mind mapping on remaining material produced from the ‘learning to ride a bike’ activity.
- Introduce visual learning techniques



### Session 3 (7<sup>th</sup> February)

#### **Aims**

- Apply learning from sessions 1 and 2 to preparation for SATs and preparation for transition to secondary school
- To focus on kinaesthetic learning
- To review the 3 sessions and outline the plan for the session in the Summer Term

#### **Plan**

- ⇒ Identify ways to prepare for SATs
- ⇒ Make mind maps for SATs preparation
- ⇒ Identify ways to prepare for transition and begin to mind map
- ⇒ Outline activity in preparation for session in the Summer term

We would hope that the sessions will produce display materials for the class to support and further consolidate what has been introduced in each session. We would also like to 'leave' the start of a mind map for preparing for transition to secondary school to which the pupils can add additional ideas prior to our session on 27<sup>th</sup> June. This session will revisit mind mapping and the information on preparing for SATs and look at what helped and what needs to be added/changed. It will also further develop the transition 'mind map'.

The class teacher is welcome to join the sessions as an observer

We would be grateful if you could let us know the number of pupils in the class. We are planning to arrive about 30 minutes before each session and expect to work within the classroom. We would want to use whiteboards/chalkboards, felt tip pens, other drawing materials, A1 and other sizes of paper and display work for the class. Are we able to use the materials in the school?

Thank you for your help. Please get in touch if you need any further information.

Charmian Hobbs  
Ann Cossavella  
Senior Educational Psychologists

**Appendix 3**  
**Letter to Pupils**  
**(originally in colour)**

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE  
WOODBOTTOM CENTRE  
OTLEY ROAD  
SHIPLEY

January Y2K+2

Dear Year 1,2,3,4,5, **6** pupil,

Our names are Ann Cossavella and Charmian Hobbs. We are **PSYCHOLOGISTS**. We will be working with you on:

- ◆ 17.1.2K+2
  - ◆ 31.1.2K+2
  - ◆ 7.2.2K+2
  - ◆ 27. 6.2K+2
- AND
- ◆ 3.10.2K+2

We will be talking about learning and asking you to help us with this . We are hoping that this will be FUN and it will help you with your work. Your teacher can explain more. We will be talking and listening, learning and playing games.

On our first meeting we will be **talking** about this **letter** - what it

said and what it looked like . We would like you to **try** and

**remember** as much of it as you can. **DON'T WORRY** it is not a test.

**We look forward to meeting a friendly class.**

**If you don't want to join in you can say "pass".**

**We'll enjoy working with you whether you're a lad or a lass**

**We know our way there, we don't need a compass!**

( Well what did you expect we are psychologists not poets)

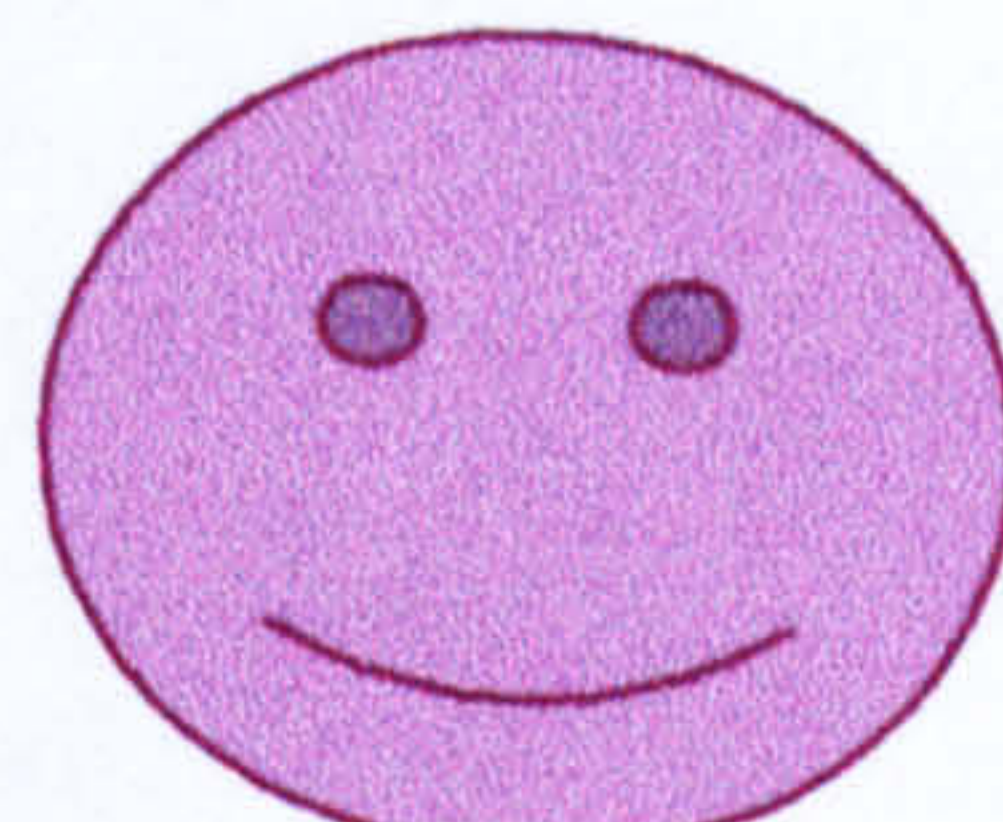
See you soon.

Best Wishes

Ann Cossavella

and

Charmian Hobbs



## **Appendix 4**

### **Outline plans for sessions 1-3**

Session 1	Auditory focus	
5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Introduce ourselves <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Work in pairs to think of a way to introduce your partner so we will remember their name e.g. think of an adjective(positive) "Able Anne"	5 10
15	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Establish ground rules <i>Need to emphasise focus on listening</i>	5
20	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Outline the aims of the sessions (see sheet) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discuss our letter to the class and ways of remembering information. Record as a mind map on white board	10
30	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Using 'learning to ride a bike' as a way of identifying the range of skills and knowledge involved in learning- <i>think about what you did, how you did it, when, where, who helped, what you felt about it, what you didn't do.</i>	10
	<p>Remember it's OK to include those who don't want to learn to ride a bike and those who want to but can't. All useful information about learning.</p> <p>⇒ Work in a pair: <i>think of 5 things each about learning to ride a bike and tell each other and write down your list- don't worry about neatness/spelling mistakes etc and if you want to draw/make a diagram that's fine as long as it's quick.</i></p> <p>⇒ Join up with 2 other pairs- 6 altogether- each pair tell the others what they have recorded, other pairs to tick off any ones which are the same, then next pair say the ones not ticked and so on. Add anything else you think of as you go along</p> <p>⇒ We talk about organising all this information so it links together and way of doing this is to group the ideas into clusters. We are doing this for learning to ride a bike but you can do this for any learning and the clusters we come up with will apply to any learning</p> <p>⇒ Cluster words- help(who), physical skills(when), interest(why), practice(How), resources(what), environment(where), barriers(problems)</p> <p>⇒ Who has put down anything to do with 'help' - ask for example, go through each cluster word. Anything that anyone has written that doesn't seem to fit in any of the clusters?</p> <p>⇒ Collect in all the recordings.</p> <p>⇒ Do ALP jokes (P 160)</p> <p>⇒ Collect in sheets to score</p> <p>⇒ One thing you have learnt today and post in box.</p>	
40		5
45		10
55		5
60		

Session 2	Visual focus	
15	Introduction	5
	Reminder about last session- learning/auditory/mind maps/ jokes	CH
	Icebreaker/Jigsaw	10
	Get into groups of 5 with 1/2 observers	CH
	AS/3 BR/3 BW/5	
	Take quick feedback- one point from each group	
	Feedback from jokes: return forms to each pupil	10
	Talk about VAK Emphasise this is just one indicator- like each pupil to 'experiment' with their indicator and see how it feels.	AC
	Organise into groups of 4+ (depending on results) V+A+K+G	15
	Make a mind map of Harry Potter story (philosophers stone). Each pupil taking on their 'role'	AC
40	Each group to circulate to look at the others one person to stay to answer queries	
	Now practised mind mapping in a group, so should have a better idea of what it's about. Going to move on to individual mind maps next week	10 CH
	Return to things that help us to learn. These are the ideas/words you came up with from the 'learning to ride a bike' activity and we said they could be applied to other types of learning. Brainstorm more words to add to this.	
50	Suggestion of creating a 'learning to learning' wall/poster with all these words/ideas which you could organise yourselves	
	Visualization	5
55	Hogwarts Train theme	AC
	1 thing I learnt today	5
60		AC

Session 3	Kinaesthetic Focus	
15	Introduction Trace the words you have learnt about learning in the air for others to guess Outline of the session Consequences	5 AC 10 AC
25	Words about things that are going to happen between now and end of year 6 and what you need/want to do. Given and individually on post its Teacher to collate class mind map	10 CH 5 AC
30	Relaxation: whole body Make individual mind maps 'Thinking what you want to do by end of the school year. What can you do to help you get there	10 CH 5 AC
40	Modelling Shapes in the air	5 AC
45	I thing I have learnt today	5 AC
60	Say goodbye Kinaesthetically	5 AC

## **Appendix 5**

**Thank you letter following sessions 1,2 and 3**



## Psychological Service

Primary School

February 2002

Dear Year 6

We really enjoyed working with you about your learning. We hope you can use some of the things we did together to help you be successful this year and in the future.

You were a quiet and attentive class, who knew lots of good words about learning. You had a really good go at the visualisation activity. Some of you seemed to enjoy making the mind maps.

We hope you do well in your SATs. We are really looking forward to meeting you again in June. We hope you try to put your own mind map into action.

We have found some sweets that are VAK to say thank you!

Best wishes

Charmian Hobbs

Ann Cossavella

## **Appendix 6**

### **Presentation to teaching staff after sessions 1, 2 and 3**

Presentation to headteachers and class teachers following the 3 sessions on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2002

- Background and rationale to overall proposal

Wanted to find out about what understanding pupils had of their own learning at the end of primary and how that impacted on transition to secondary school

- Session planning

Built sessions around 2 key themes

Introducing information on learning styles

- ⇒ Used mind maps as differentiates well, appropriate to a range of learning styles, can be used as class, group or individually, no right or wrong, different from curriculum content, non linear, fun to do
- ⇒ Introduced VAK to consider different ways of learning and finding out your own ways. With knowledge that the approach was used in the valley

Strategies to support learning

- ☑ Visualization and relaxation
- ☑ Group work
- ☑ Whole class contribution
- ☑ 5wh
- ☑ transferable knowledge (bike)
- ☑ successful learners (learnt to ride a bike)
- ☑ techniques for remembering

⇒ Initial commentary

- ⇒ The 3 groups were very different ( class groupings, teacher style, VAK differences, gender differences, time of day, our skills, etc)
- ⇒ Focus on SATs varied
- ⇒ No transition planning issues
- ⇒ Knew about learning but not reflective about it
- ⇒ Remembered the activities not the process- needs to be followed through

Information from PCs loosely fell into 3 areas

- ☑ Concrete information- how to spell determination, more about Harry Potter
- ☑ Techniques- how to make a mind map, brainstorm, remember by chunking, 5whh, visualisation
- ☑ Process- working with others is sometimes easier than working alone, everybody's thought counts, different ways to learn e.g. VAK, working in groups, how other people learn, to cope in hard times, to listen to other people's ideas, how people can help, how friends can help me learn.

Process was less frequently mentioned on the PCs.

We felt

- ☑ Haven't done this teaching thing for a while- reflect on year 8 experience- do pupils reflect on learning- faith renewed
- ☑ Enjoyed it – good to work with a class
- ☑ Team work pays off

- Some things worked well, others we would change- pace, organisation, instructions rather than content.
- Revised from week to week therefore structure and content may have varied from initial outline

To support this input from us then

- Introduce learning wall
- Build on mind maps
- Remind about VAK strategies
- Prepare pupils for our session in June (we'll send information beforehand)

Further thoughts/ideas/suggestions

- Is there a way of building this or similar into the curriculum from reception? A whole school approach for all staff
- What would you expect pupils to know about their own learning by the end of primary school
- How is/could this be feedback to pupils/parents
- Is there any assessment of learning style or approaches – metacognitive skills
- How does this support or otherwise secondary school learning

Questions/Discussion

**Appendix 7**  
**Questionnaire for Teachers**

## **Questionnaire for staff**

**Thank you for enabling us to spend 3 hours with your class. We would appreciate some feedback about your views on the sessions**

- ⇒ How far do you think we have addressed the aims in our original proposal (see attached sheet)**
  
- ⇒ What have been the learning points for you as the class teacher (Content? Process? Group dynamics? ....)**
  
- ⇒ What do you think you might want to take forward into the rest of this year?**
  
- ⇒ If the sessions were to be repeated for year 6 next year, what would you keep? What would you change? What would you want to develop?**

**Any other comments**

**Thank you  
Ann Cossavella  
Charmian Hobbs**

## **Appendix 8**

### **Email to pupils about session 4**

*email address*

## Charmian Hobbs

---

**From:** Charmian Hobbs  
**Sent:** 13 June 2002 14:18  
**To:** 'office@allsaintsilkeley.ngfl.ac.uk'; 'office@benrhydding.ngfl.ac.uk'  
**Subject:** Ann Cossavella and Charmian Hobbs work with year 6

This is an email for the year 6 group we will be working with on June 27th. Could you pass it on to them for Ann and myself, thanks  
Charmian

Dear Year 6

We thought we'd email you to say we are coming to work with you again on 27th June in the morning. We last met in February and talked about mind mapping and learning styles(amongst other things!). We are coming back to find out how useful this was and to talk to you about your move to secondary school.  
Looking forward to seeing you again  
Ann and Charmian



## **Appendix 9**

### **Outline Plan of Session 4**

## Learning to Learn: Session 4

Time cumulative	Time Activity	Activity
Prior to session		Email schools
	5	Introduce ourselves Pupils introduce themselves plus learner style
5	10	Make a mind map of anything remembered from previous sessions- individual, pair or group of up to 4
15	5	How useful were the sessions? Mark out of 10 and why Post in box (and collect statements for next activity)
20	5	Find 1 other person who has a statement that describes the same learning style as yours and sit at your V/A/K table
25	5	When you have 10 statements, stick on to flip chart and illustrate
30	5	At the end choose 1/2 reporters Clear up and return tables to original organisation
35	5	Whole class brainstorm- words you associate with moving to secondary school
40	5	Individually write a message to your form tutor- text, email, postcard, cartoon Ask if they want it to be sent to tutor
45	10	In 2 halves How would you like to say goodbye to primary How would you like secondary to welcome you group mind map
55	5	Tell us a joke!
60	5	One thing you like to tell us or ask us
65	5	Next steps

## **Appendix 10**

### **Thank you letter following session 4**

File  
co

Our ref: Let2July8AC-BH  
Your ref:

Psychological Service

8 July 2002

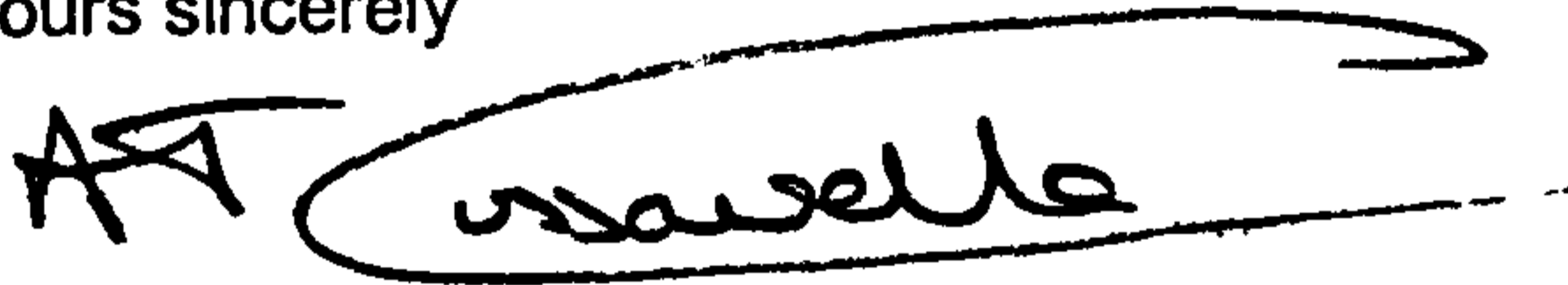
Dear Lynne and Year 6 staff

We would like to thank you for allowing us to undertake research on "Learning to Learn" with your Year 6 group. We have gained a great deal from the process and from your pupils. This will be written up as part of Charmian's doctoral thesis and we will let you have copies of the relevant parts.

Please pass on our thanks and best wishes to Year 6. As they requested we have passed on their comments, on their new schools, to the relevant person (Richard Jennings in the case of IGS). We will also be arranging a follow up feedback from the pupils who go to IGS sometime in October 2002.

Thank you once again, wishing you and your pupils a restful holiday and a re-invigorated start to the new school year.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ann Cossavella", is written over a large, horizontal, hand-drawn oval scribble.

**Ann Cossavella and Charmian Hobbs**  
**Senior Educational Psychologist**

1/1/02

**Appendix 11**  
**Letter to Mr X**

30<sup>th</sup> June 2002

Dear Mr

**Learning to Learn sessions at All Saints, Ben Rhydding and Burley and Woodhead Primary Schools.**

Ann Cossavella and myself met with the year 6 pupils at All Saints, Ben Rhydding and Burley and Woodhead Primary Schools for our final session over the last 2 weeks. Part of the session focussed on the transition to secondary school, and as you will know, the vast majority of pupils are moving on to Ilkley Grammar School. We asked them to write a brief message to their new form tutor, saying whatever they wanted to tell them about themselves, what they were looking forward to, or their worries. We agreed with them that this information would not be passed on unless that was what they wanted. Some pupils did ask for their message to be forwarded, and these messages are attached under three different headings –anonymous, to individual tutors and by pupil name. As we undertook the last session over two weeks, some pupils had visited Ilkley Grammar School to meet their form tutors and others had not.

In our final session, we explained that we planned to meet with them again after they had started at Ilkley Grammar, to find out whether the sessions were helpful and how they had found the move to Secondary School. We have already agreed with you that we would come into Ilkley Grammar School on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> October. As the pupils will be dispersed into various classes, it would not seem practical to 'teach' them as we have at the primary schools. We would hope to meet with them all again but there are a number of options, all of which would need to fit in with school arrangements. We could meet in a series of 'focus groups' for a shorter period than a lesson, or with sample groups or use a questionnaire approach, or you may have a further suggestion.

We look forward to hearing from you

Charmian Hobbs  
Ann Cossavella

Senior Educational Psychologists

## **Messages from year 6 pupils at All Saints, Ben Rhydding and Burley and Woodhead Primary Schools.**

**These messages are only those which the individual pupils wanted to be passed on.**

### **Anonymous**

Can I sit next to someone nice?

See you at lower site and hope you're funny

Looking forward to coming

I would like to tell you I am not that good at English

I don't want too much fuss

I don't want you to be mean to me

I am scared of getting a detention

I do not like answering questions in a class discussion and I am very shy

Can we please stay in our forms on Friday?

I look forward to Ilkley Grammar, the teachers seem nice.

I hope you don't tell lots of people off at Ilkley Grammar

Can we please sit near our friends on Friday morning?

I do not want much homework

### **To individual teachers, sometimes with the pupil's name**

I don't want you to be mean and strict and don't pick on me (Miss Hunstrod)

I don't want you to be mean (Mrs Stageman)

When we are really good give us some sweets or watch T.V. (Mrs Stageman)

I want you to know I am very chatty and lively (Mrs B.)

I am very sensitive so I will get upset easily and be happy happy, HAPPY. I'm not that good at maths either (Miss Huntrods from Niki)

I just thought you might like to know that I'm Rose Rounds sister but please don't call me Rose (Mrs Hahn from Beth)

I don't want you to pick on me but I like teachers who are funny. I'm looking forward to being in your class. I promise not to talk when I'm not supposed to. (Mrs Brandl from Matthew Miles)

Don't want to be strict just be happy. By the way I'm not very good at maths but I will try my best. (Miss Huntrods from Beckie Cove)

Please tell year 7s not to patronise us because it makes us feel like outsiders. Also don't prepare us anymore because we've been prepared a bit too much, we want to find things out for ourselves (Mrs Bolton)

Don't act like we're new; it makes us feel like we're outsiders. We've been prepared more than enough. (Mr Oldfield)

Please tell the year 7s not to be so patronising. It makes us feel like outsiders. Also we've been prepared a bit too much. We can't find things out. (Mrs Stageman)

Please have no fussing. No homework to start off with. Extended break. No special welcomes (Mrs Davies)

I will try to be good and please don't shout at me (Mr Oldfield from Matthew Pearson)

## **From named pupils**

**Please may I be in Charlotte Wright's group (Sophie Kyriakides)**

**Don't give me too much homework (Sophie Kyriakides)**

**I want a massive rock show and be allowed to wear our own clothes for the first day (Max Silvey)**

**I enjoy many sports and football is my favourite (Alice Johnson)**

**I like being with my friends and talking with them (Lucy Arundell)**

**I like playing football (David Hargreaves)**

**My hobbies are football, tennis. My age is 11. My favourite subject is maths (Jack Williams)**

**My hobbies are skiing and biking and I love to listen to dance and punk music. I like all sports. My best sport is tennis. My best subject is games. (Oliver Cargill)**

**I'm good at sports (Karl Houchen)**

**I'm very jolly and always making people happy. I love to make new friends. I'm very organised. I am looking forward to be going to Ilkley grammar. (Jade Mitchell)**

**Please may I sit at the front with my new friend madilin all the time cause I don't like it at the back. (Vickie)**

**I'm looking forward to coming and my teacher is very nice (Chris)**

**I'm looking forward to coming into Grammar. Could you take it easy the first week? (Marcus Roberts)**

**Hello.. I look forward to going to Ilkley Grammar (Dominic Roebuck)**

**I am looking forward to being in your class; you look a good teacher (Sam Needham)**

**Collated by Charmian Hobbs 30<sup>th</sup> June 2002**



The Psychological Service

ATZ  
16.7.02

Dear Charmian / Ann

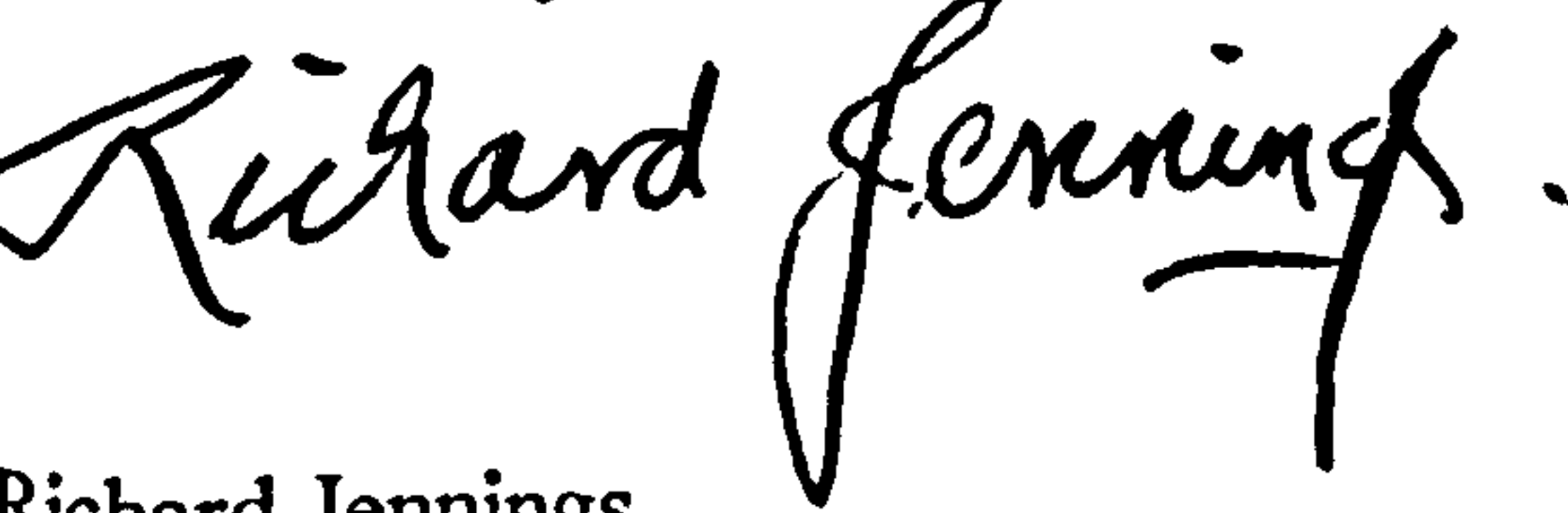
**Learning to Learn**

Thank you for your letter and the comments from some of the primary pupils. These have been used in conjunction with our Induction Programme and I hope that any fears and apprehensions some of the pupils had have been alleviated.

I have noted October 3<sup>rd</sup> as the date you would like to come to the Lower Site to see the pupils. There is no problem with this at all but I would like you to contact me nearer the time to discuss the format and time. As yet, we do not have our timetables for next year so I am unable to see which lessons pupils have and the rooms available at the time of your visit.

I look forward to hearing from you at the beginning of next term

Yours sincerely



Richard Jennings  
Head of Lower School

## **Appendix 12**

### **Questions for year 6 teachers**

## Questions for year 6 teachers

At the end of year 6

- What do you think pupils know about 'how they learn'?
- What do you think school has done to encourage this?
- What do you think you have done?
- What, if anything, did our sessions add?

**VAK, Visualization, relaxation, mind mapping.....**

do you think knowing about your learning helps

- -with SATs-?

- with transition?

## **Appendix 13**

### **Letter to Pupils in Secondary School**

Dear Year 7 Pupil

Do you remember the lessons with Ann Cossavella and Charmian Hobbs last year in your primary school? We talked about how you might learn in different ways. We would like to come and talk with you again about how you learn now at Ilkley Grammar School. We said we would do this at the end of our last lesson with you in June.

We would like to talk about

- How you have found the move Secondary School?
- What do you remember about the lessons with Ann and Charmian?
- Have you used any of the different ways of learning we tried with you?
- How is learning the same or different for you Secondary School?

Unfortunately we can't talk to everyone because there isn't enough time. What we would like to do is to talk with 6 small groups of about 10 pupils each on Friday November 1<sup>st</sup>. Each session would last about 30 minutes and would be tape-recorded. The tape recorder is because we wouldn't be able to remember everything you said or write it down and listen at the same time. The only people who will listen to the tapes are Ann and Charmian.

We would like each focus group to be pupils who came from the same primary school. This is because we worked with you as a class before.

If you would like to join a focus group please could you fill in the details on the attached slip and give it to.....

We are keen that everyone who wants to come can 'have a say', so if there are lots of requests we will try to think of a way in which everyone can give us their views.

Looking forward to talking to you again

Charmian Hobbs

Ann Cossavella

---

Reply slip for Ann Cossavella and Charmian Hobbs  
To be returned to  
By 15<sup>th</sup> October 2002

---

**Please circle your answers**

I am/am not interested in talking to Ann and Charmian

I went to A / B/ C Primary School

Please fill in the details below

Name

Form

Form Tutor

Thank you

## **Appendix 14**

**Letter to Parents of the pupils in secondary School.**

October 2002

Dear Parents

You may remember that last year we worked with year 6 pupils on ways of helping them to know how they might learn most effectively. We would like to meet with them again to talk about the transition to Secondary School and the similarities and differences in ways of learning between their primary and secondary school. Each pupil whom we worked with has received an individual letter which is copied for you below and gives more details of the organisation.

If you want any further information or have any questions please get in touch with either of us via .... Secondary School

This work is part of research being undertaken by ourselves which is designed to support pupils and their schools develop more effective learning.

Yours sincerely

Charmian Hobbs

Ann Cossavella

Dear Year 7 Pupil

Do you remember the lessons with Ann Cossavella and Charmian Hobbs last year in your primary school? We talked about how you might learn in different ways.

We would like to come and talk with you again about how you learn now at Secondary School. We said we would do this at the end of our last lesson with you in June.

We would like to talk about

- How you have found the move to Secondary School?
- What do you remember about the lessons with Ann and Charmian?
- Have you used any of the different ways of learning we tried with you?
- How is learning the same or different for you at Secondary School?

Unfortunately we can't talk to everyone because there isn't enough time. What we would like to do is to talk with 6 small groups of about 10 pupils each on Friday November 1<sup>st</sup>. Each session would last about 30 minutes and would be tape-recorded. The tape recorder is because we wouldn't be able to remember everything you said or write it down and listen at the same time. The only people who will listen to the tapes are Ann and Charmian.

**We would like each focus group to be pupils who came from the same primary school. This is because we worked with you as a class before.**

If you would like to join a focus group please could you fill in the details on the attached slip and give it to.....

We are keen that everyone who wants to come can 'have a say', so if there are lots of requests we will try to think of a way in which everyone can give us their views.

Looking forward to talking to you again

Charmian Hobbs

Ann Cossavella



## **Appendix 15**

### **Suggestions to the Mr X (secondary school)**

- Questionnaires used are similar to others that are available in this area – though the multiple intelligences one omits 'naturalist', which is commonly included now
- There is no information on the validity of these questionnaires in general or these ones in particular, therefore they should be viewed with great caution
- Both multiple intelligences and VAK learning styles are theoretical positions; there are others ways of considering learning

Given the above the next steps could be

- Ask the pupils- does the outcome match with how they see themselves as learners? – ask them to give examples of matches/mismatches- this could be a tutor group activity
- Ask the staff as above

This would be a way of introducing a discussion about learning into tutor groups and perhaps more broadly across the curriculum

The following sheets cover

- Multiple intelligences and how these relate to learning
- A lesson assessment process
- Questions to consider in curriculum delivery

## Multiple Intelligences

Intelligence area	Is strong in	Likes to	Learns best through
Verbal-linguistic	Reading, writing, telling stories, memorising verbal/written information, thinking in words	Read, write, talk, memorise, analyse	Reading, hearing and seeing words, speaking, writing, discussing and debating
Math-logic	Maths, reasoning, logic, problem-solving, patterns	Solve problems, question, work with numbers, categorise, experiment	Working with patterns and relationships, classifying, categorising, working with abstract
Spatial	Reading, maps, charts, drawing, mazes, puzzles, imaging things, visualisation	Design, draw, build, create, daydream, look at pictures	Working with pictures and colours, visualising, drawing
Kinaesthetic	Athletics, dancing, acting, crafts, using tools	Move around, use the body, demonstrate, use body language, touch	Touching, moving, trial and error, practical activities, demonstration, modelling
Musical	Singing, picking up sounds, remembering melodies, rhythms	Sing, hum, play an instrument, listen to music	Rhythm, melody, singing, listening to music, melodies
naturalistic	Understanding nature, making distinctions, identifying flora and fauna	Be involved in nature, make distinctions,	Working in nature, exploring nature, learning about plants and natural events
Interpersonal	Understanding people, leading, organising, communicating, resolving conflicts, selling	Have friends, talk to people, join groups	Sharing, comparing, relating, interviewing, co-operating
Intrapersonal	Understanding self, recognising strengths and weaknesses setting goals	Work alone, reflect, pursue interests.	Working alone, doing self paced projects, having space, reflecting

## **Multiple intelligence Lesson Assessment**

Lesson.....

Date.....

How did the lesson address the different intelligences?

Which pupils seemed most interested? When?

Which pupils seemed less interested? When?

Were there any difficulties in the lesson? Do these difficulties relate to different intelligences?

What would I do differently? How would this relate to the different intelligences?

## Am I giving the pupils a balanced diet?

- Kinaesthetic activities: doing, touching, handling, feeling things- cutting, pasting, constructing building, improvising, role play, miming, modelling.
- Intrapersonal activities: thinking things through or working independently. Identifying questions to ask, making sense for yourself
- Interpersonal activities: discussing and co-operating in pairs, groups, teams
- Linguistic activities: writing, reading, discussing, playing with words
- Logical activities: ordering, organising, sequencing, calculating, categorising
- Musical activities: rhymes, raps, relaxing, energising, revising with music, singing, inventing a jingle, listening to the mood in music
- Visual/spatial activities: maps, paint, sketch, draw, design. Charts , plans, illustrate, naturalistic; thinking about the environment
- Emotional activities: responding with feelings, intuitive, aesthetic appreciation, awe and wonder

## **Appendix 16**

### **Outline questions for focus groups**

## Possible questions for sessions

- ⇒ How have you found move from primary to secondary- memorable moment?
- ⇒ What do you remember of sessions we did at primary school? Any examples?
- ⇒ Have you been able to use any of the ideas/techniques to support joining Ilkley? In your learning?
- ⇒ How is learning the same/different from primary school? Prompts-teaching? Organisation of classes/? Groups? Different lessons?
- ⇒ Have the teachers talked about the ways you learn at Ilkley?

## **Appendix 17**

### **List of research material**



1. **Documentation that was particular to a session, for example a whole class collation of an activity**
  - What did you remember about the letter sent to each pupil prior to the sessions explaining what the sessions were about and who we were (whole class record)
  - How I learnt to ride a bike (individual sheet)
  - Learning to ride a bike (whole class collation)
  - A consequences sheet about what will help with learning (individual record)
  - What do you want/need to do from now until the end of year 6 (individual and whole class mind map)
  - Planning for the rest of year 6 (whole class and individual mind maps)
  - What do I remember (individual sheets)?
  - Moving on to IGS (Whole class and groups mind maps)
  - Saying goodbye (Whole class and groups mind maps)
  - Postcards to IGS (Individual)
  
2. **Documentation that ran throughout the sessions, for example the individual postcards filled in at the end of each session**
  - Individual postcards: One thing I have learnt to day
  - Individual postcards: how would you rate the sessions and why
  - Individual postcards: something you would like to say to us about the sessions
  
3. **Information from staff questionnaires and interviews**
  - Questionnaire after sessions 1,2 and 3
  - Structured interview after sessions in the Primary Schools
  
4. **Reflections and review**
  - Examples of notes

## **Appendix 18**

### **Pupil sheet about learning to ride a bike**

# Riding a bike

Richard

1. dad held back of my seat
2. Got bike with no stabilisers
3. Road up street
4. Kept my confidence
5. Kept balance
6. Wore protective gear
7. Mum dad etc helped
8. Start with tricycle
9. Practiced and got better
10. Got from little bike to big
11. Got a better bike as got bet  
at riding.

**Appendix 19**  
**Consequences sheet**

Help with my learning for the rest of this year.

---

What I can do to help me learn: I can take in anything that is important.

---

What my friends can do to help me learn:

my friend can help me to learn by doing things

What my class can do to help me learn:

go round the class every one answer a

<sup>question</sup>  
What my teacher can do to help me learn: help me when I am

doing something <sup>w</sup>rong.

---

What school can do to help me learn:

have a friendly environment

---

What people at home can do to help me learn:

Get help me on my homework and if I go wrong tell me what I've done wrong so I understand

## **Appendix 20**

**What do you need/want for the rest of the year**

**Hand written record of whole class mind map (pupils retained the original**

AS

get quite good  
marks in SATS

FINISH OFF  
ICE SKATE

SPORTS  
CLUBS

PRACTICE  
INKING

READ ENGLISH  
I would like to read  
more books x 2

END TIME WITH  
FRIENDS

HAVE FUN

✓ I'd like to improve on  
my drawing - I could  
get to band in the  
grammar school or do well  
in SATS

✓ Really hard on my SATS  
to improve on spelling  
I would like to improve  
my maths or do  
well in spelling  
Improve on my  
do well in SATS

I would like to  
✓ get better at  
Spelling ~~maths~~

MATHS

✓ French or Languages  
✓ Pass SATS exams

DO HOMEWORK  
Pass SATS exams

ACTIVITIES IN ✓ do well in  
SCHOOL SATS

Year 6

✓ get better at  
subject

SCIENCE

HOMEWORK

✓ improve on handwriting  
✓ spelling SATS SUBJECTS

GET HELP WITH

✓ improve on my  
grammar at handwriting

USE INTERNET

WRITING OUT OF  
SCHOOL

(OTHER SUBJECTS)

TIPS

have a private  
tutor

✓ I would like  
to get better at  
Sport because at  
grammar school  
they do handwriting  
really bad

✓ get better at things I am  
bad at

books

✓ start doing my  
homework

Buy school uniform

VISIT SECONDARY SCHOOL

PRACTICE WRITING TO

GET READY FOR  
SECONDARY  
SCHOOL

NEW SCHOOL

✓ Buy new school things  
like pens

## **Appendix 21**

### **Planning for the rest of year 6**

**Individual mind map (original of example used in text)**

**Individual mind map (further example)**



well

SCHOOL

DEKING

Trips:  
Kingswood

Homeschool

Aikido

Guitar

TV

Best friends

Sojo  
Tim  
Matt.H.  
Laurie  
Alex  
Robert

FRIENDS

FUN

Skateboarding/  
cycling

Playing on:  
Playstation,  
PC

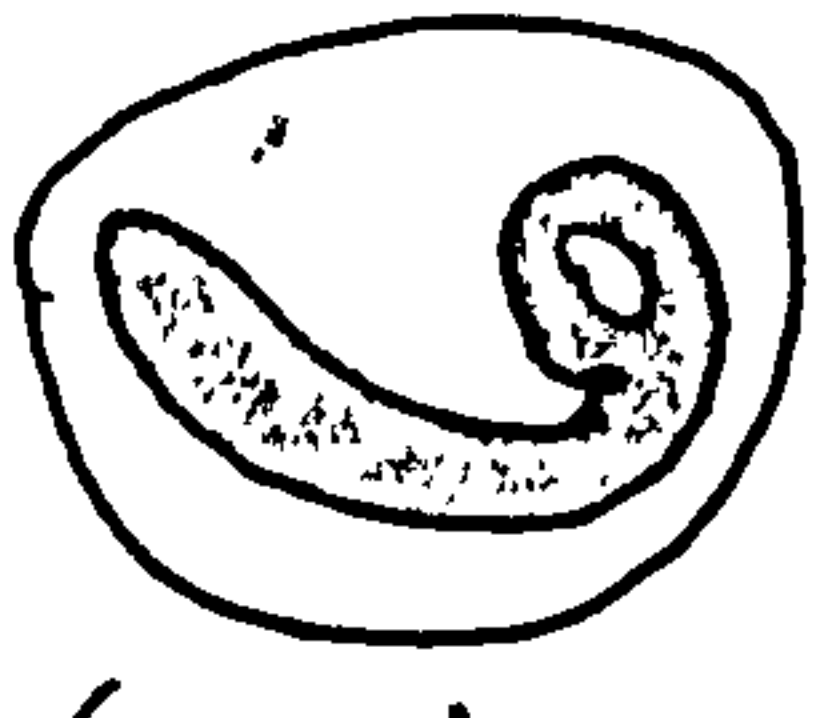
Games.  
Tomb Raider II  
Rollage  
Smackdown 2  
Harry Potter  
Tony Hawks 2  
Driver 2

MUSIC

Music I  
like:  
Limp Bizkit  
Sum 41  
Papa Roach.

SPORTS

Sports I do:  
Aikido  
Climbing club  
Cycling  
Skateboarding (extreme)



teachers

Mrs Adsett

Miss Sutch

Sally

friends

Sophie

Whole class Steph M + W

Sats

bring revision ☺

enjoy it / think?

look forward

Sarah H + P

Emma

Emma

Netball

Outside School

recreation

swimming

get silver / gold

netball

Doing really well in jazz, ballet and Drama

(school)

Handwriting / Spelling P.E

Art

English

History

Maths

Geography

Science

DT

ICT

Phse

Play game by advanced

Swimming

Don't miss

family

Swimming

recreation

Kings wood

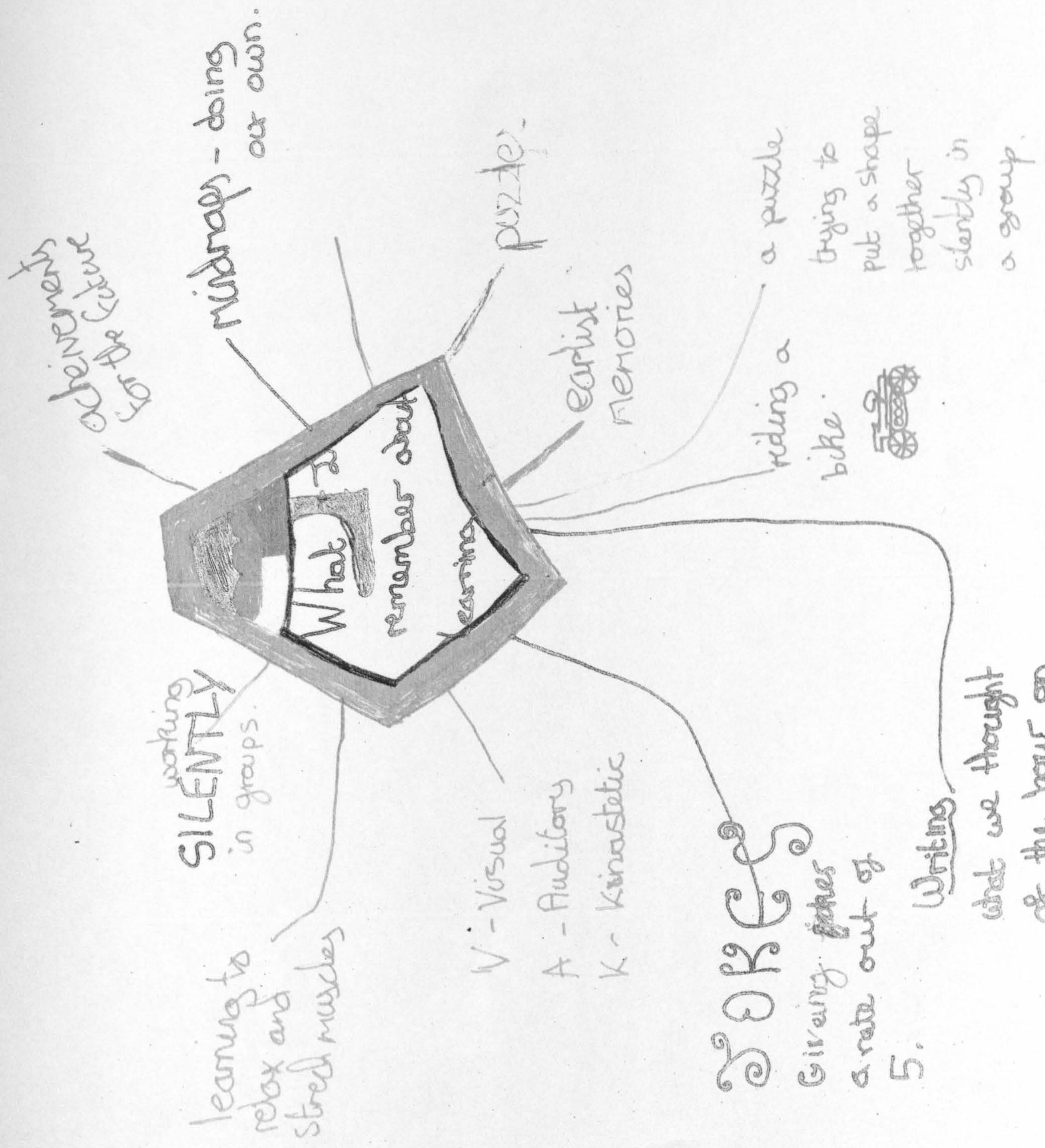
netball

## **Appendix 22**

### **What do I remember?**

Haley  
Sophie

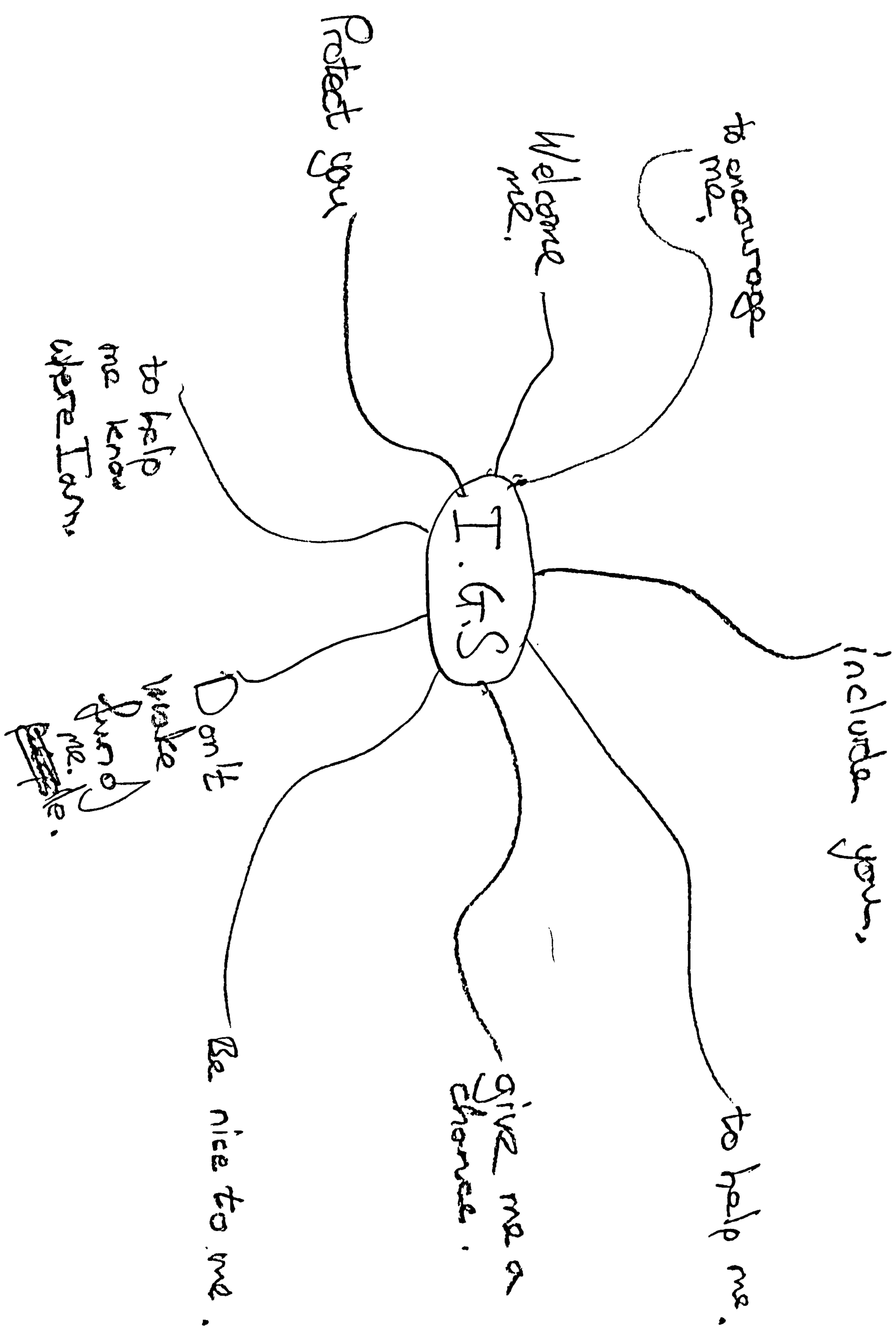
April 23  
Monday 11:55



**WORKS**  
Giving jokes  
a rate out of  
5.

Writing  
what we thought  
of the hour on  
a piece of card and posting it

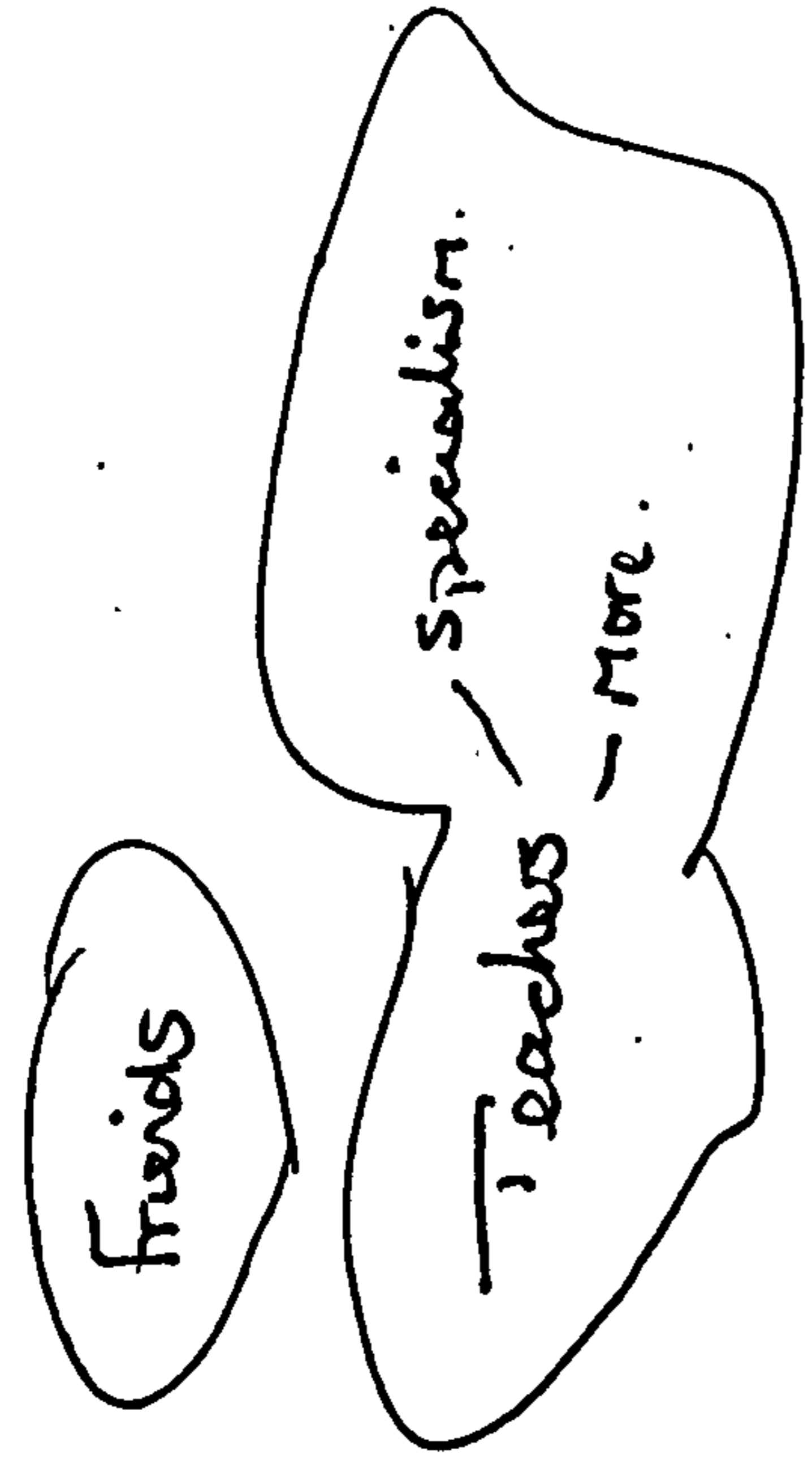
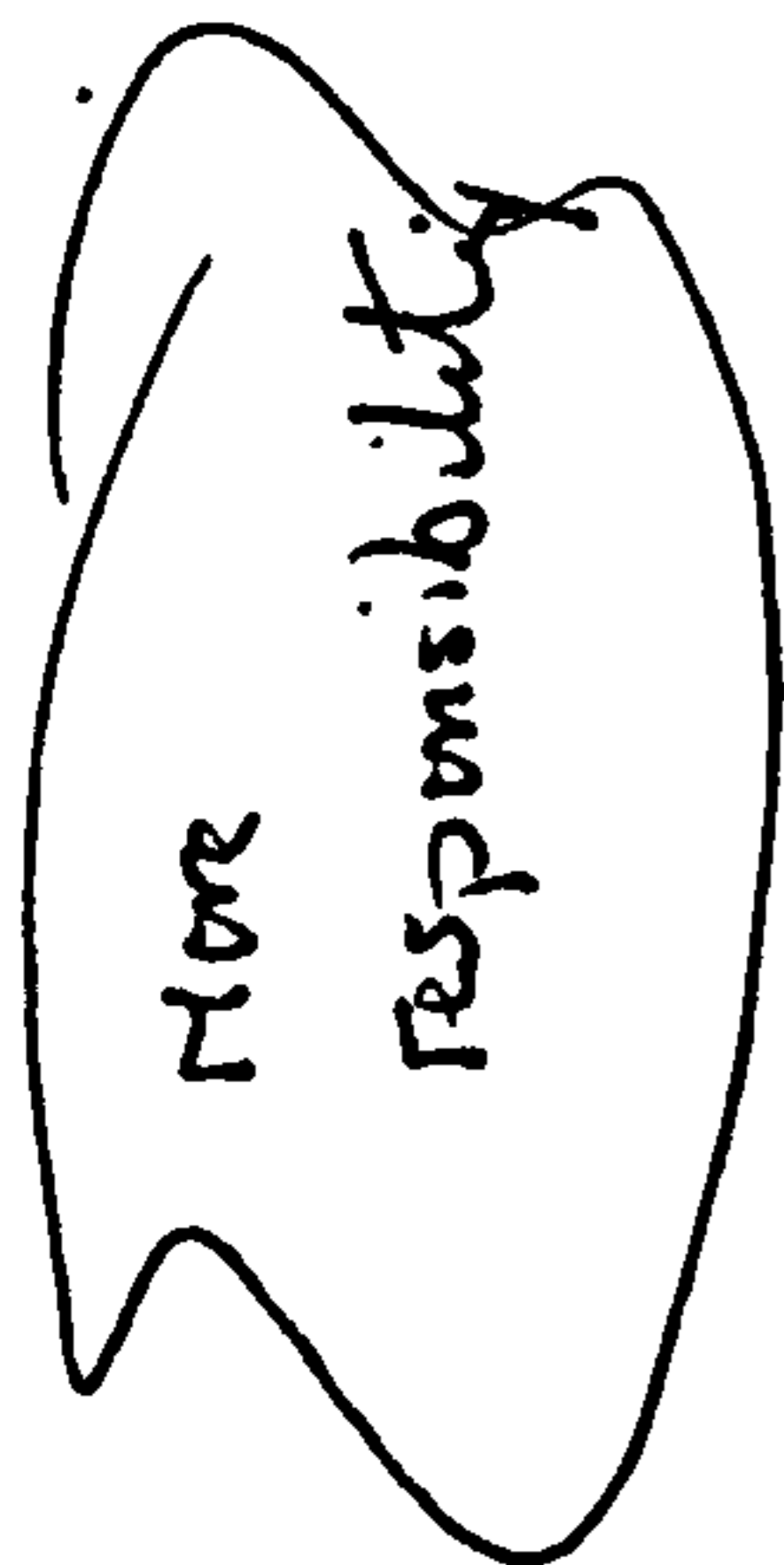
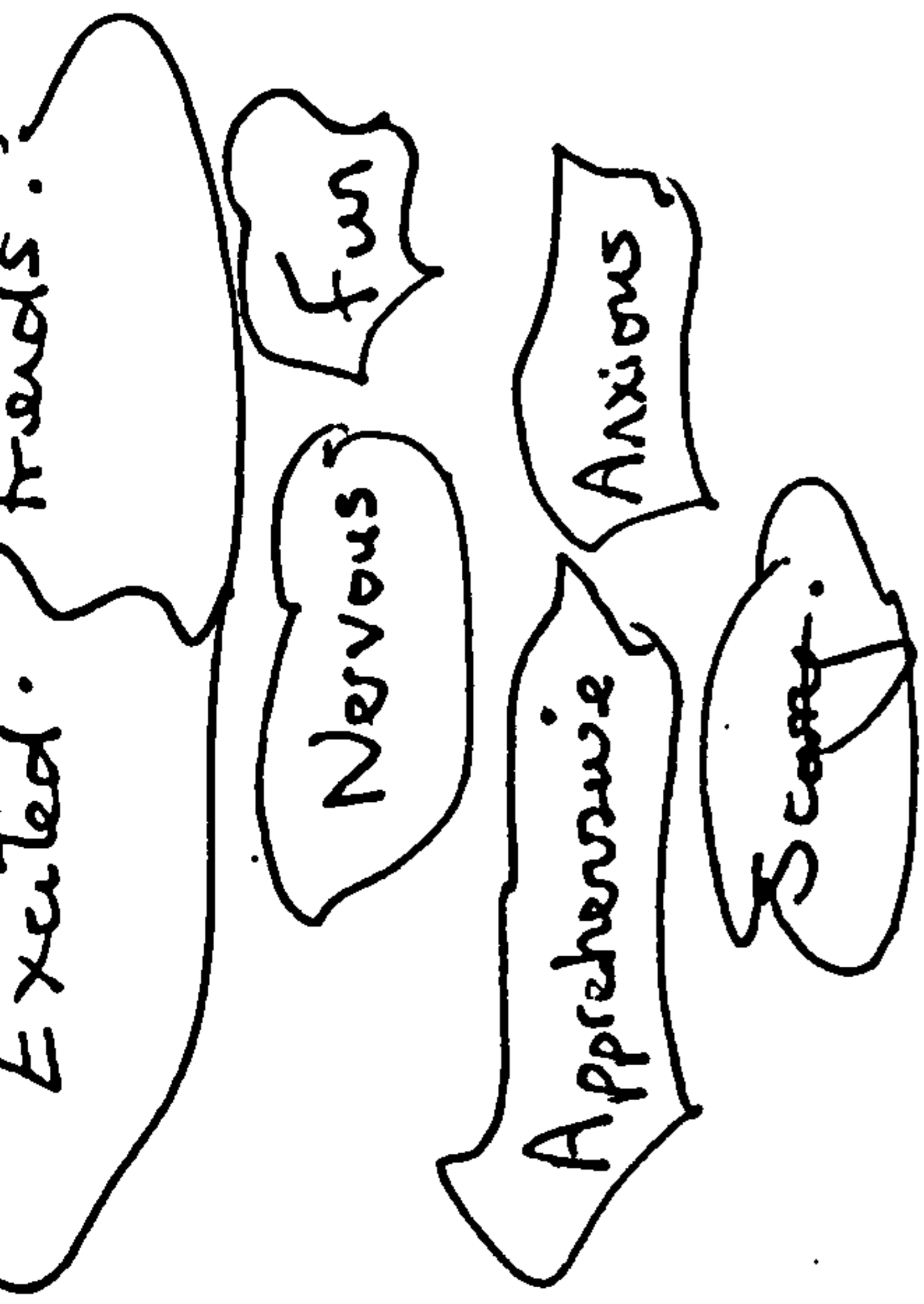
**Appendix 23**  
**Moving on to IGS**



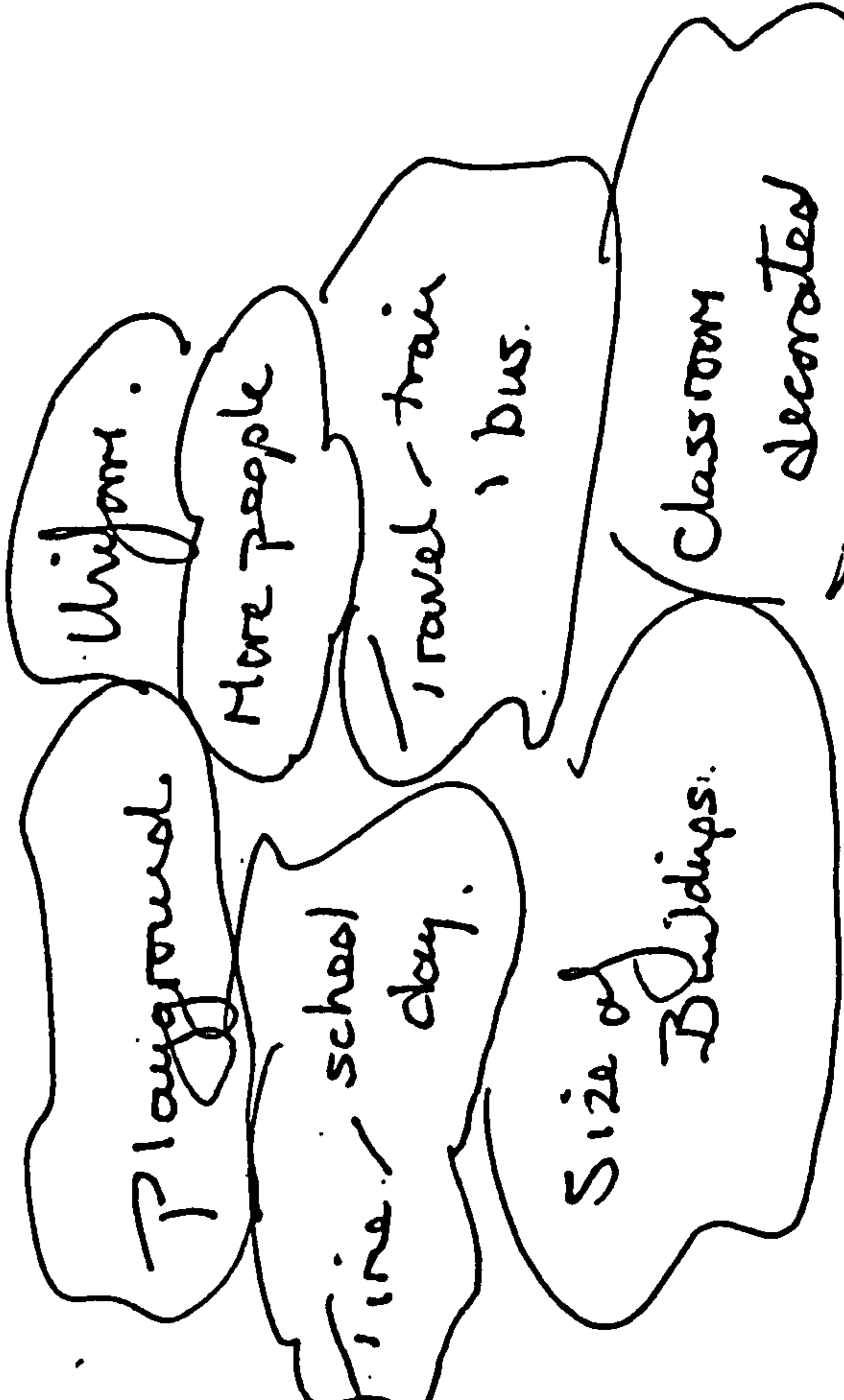
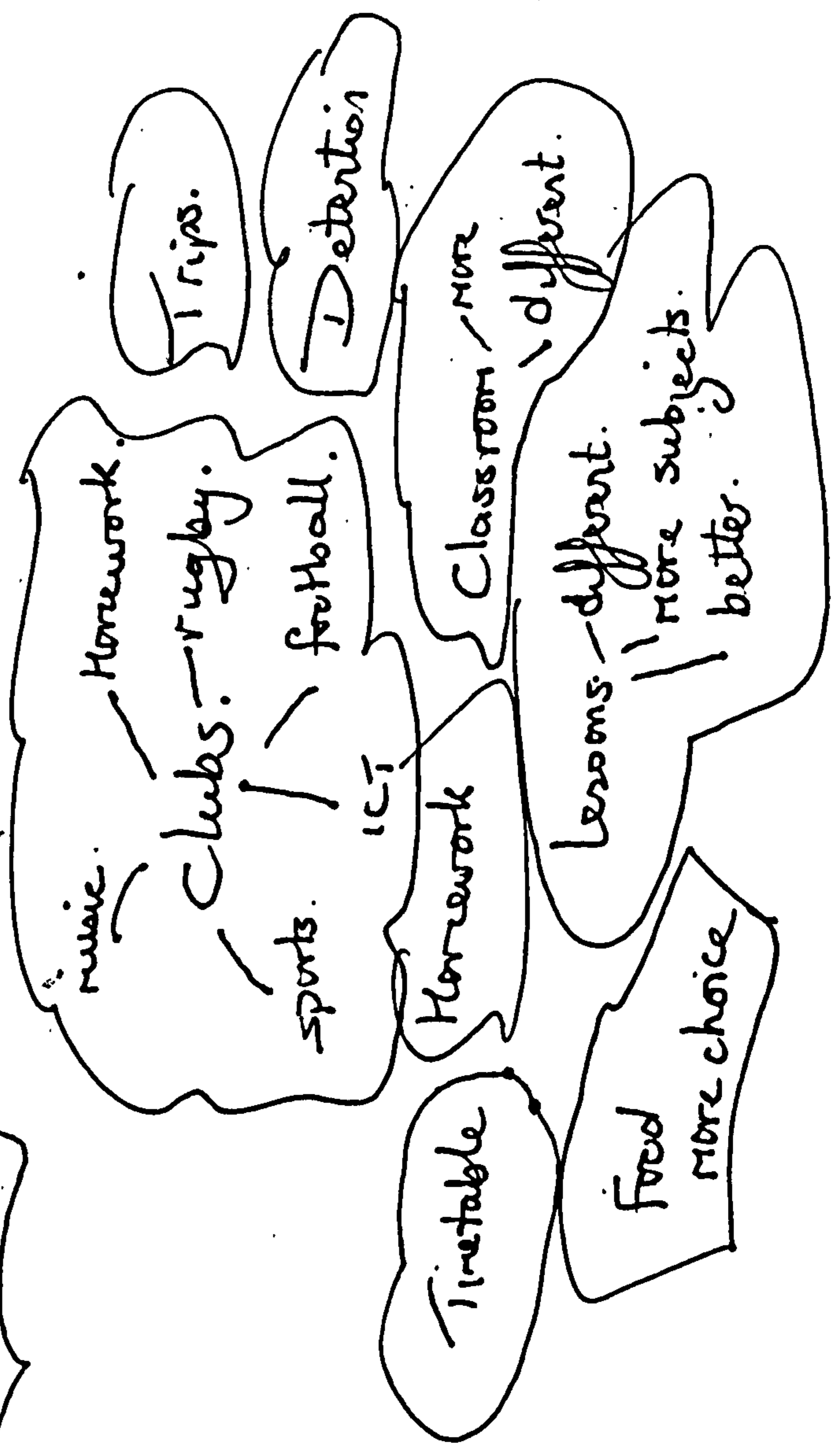
## **Appendix 24**

**Whole class mind map of moving on to IGS**

**(Hand written record. Original remained with class)**



# My Next School





## **Appendix 25**

**Collation of 'One thing I have learnt today' on individual postcards from session 2**

**Example of Individual postcard**

## ONE THING I HAVE LEARNT TODAY IS (week 2)

AS

I have learnt more about Harry Potter and there are 3 ways of learning  
V.A.K.

Today I learnt that mind maps don't have to be based on writing

I learnt that visualisation for me doesn't work at all

One thing I have learnt today is that there is 3 ways of learning

One thing I have learnt is I learn better by hearing and following words,  
Auditory

Visual, Auditory, Kinaesthetic-I realised which or how I learn best

I have learnt that visualisation does not work for me

One thing I learnt is people learn in different ways and I am best at doing  
stuff

One thing I have learnt today is that different people learn in different  
ways

I have learnt to visual

I have learnt to use my imagination more

I have learnt that I am a visual and kinaesthetic learner

I have learnt VAK

I have learned what VaK stands for

I have learnt you can visualise yourself getting better at things and it  
worked for me

One thing I have learnt today is about VAK

How to visualise

I learnt what visual, auditory and kinaesthetic ment

I have learnt to use my imagination

I learnt how to visualise well

Working in groups

What V,A and K meant

I have learnt more about Harry Potter

BR

That Tom hates Harry Potter

Harry potter sucks

I learnt that I am not very good at visualising in my mind

How to help each other without talking to make a square and how to signal  
what to do with a square

I have learnt that Charmian can't spell

I've learned that other people learn differently from the way that I do

I learnt that I couldn't be hipnotised. I learnt all about Harry Potter

I learnt I can be both Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic  
I've learnt I can use my mind to learn  
To work with other children instead of my friends  
Have not learnt anything  
I learnt more about mind maps  
I learnt to visualise  
I learnt that I make a mind map and I liked the sleep think thing  
One thing I learnt today you need to talk  
I am a kinaesthetic  
Working by myself without my friends  
That other people don't like Harry Potter apart from me  
I have learned that learning can be fun if you see it for yourself and I  
learned a bit more about Harry Potter. I liked doing the mind maps  
because it's fun  
I have learned many things

BW

One thing I have learnt today is that a mind map is so interesting  
I learnt all about visual-what you see, auditory what you hear,  
kinaesthetic, actually doing something  
Visual ways to learn, did a mind map, auditory way to learn, kinaesthetic  
way to learn  
I learnt visualised learning today  
The one thing I learnt was the journey on Hogwarts express and the web  
about Harry Potter  
How to do a mind map  
I have learnt how other people learn  
I learnt more about Potter, Harry Potter  
I learned how to learn things  
One thing I have learned today is what VAK stand for.  
To sleep in class  
I have learned how sports people think how to win  
How to use a spidergram or mind plan  
I learnt today that you can see things really well in your mind with your  
eyes shut  
I've learnt how to visualise things in my head and I also learnt how to  
learn other things. Thank You!  
VAK means Visual, Auditory-hearing words-kinaesthetic-movement. All to  
do with learning  
One thing I have learnt today is that I think auditory  
I have learnt about the different ways people learn (VAK)

One thing I have learned today: all about visual realisation

About visualisation

One thing I learnt about today was how to visualise how to improve things

How footballers unstress themselves

Today I have learnt today is how famous people get better and better at what they do. That different people learn in different ways, whichever is best for them. Thank you it was cool!

What VA and K meant. When we did guided fantasy

How fun puzzles are

How to focus on one thing in my head

One thing I have learnt today was a new way to learn a problem also

learnt some new words. Thank you it was really fun

What Kinaesthetic means and auditory means as well

A better way of learning and the  
mind game.

SWI

## **Appendix 26**

### **Transcript of one focus group**

**B and W**

**Can we start off with how the transition from B and W to IGS has been for you? How have you found it?**

**Well when we first came like a big difference like cos we were travelling differently we were going on buses and not being the oldest in the school was very very weird  
Was it?**

**Yeah**

**And do you all come on the bus you don't use the train**

**Most people**

**Most people go on the bus**

**So travelling is an extra thing and being the youngest**

**The school being so big. It's a big thing**

**Lots and lots of other pupils**

**I like moving round to different classes and now I've got used to the school and I know where everything is and everything**

**So moving to different classes is OK and now you've got used to it so you're not getting**

**And different subjects**

**Right**

**I like the lessons more here than at primary school**

**Why do you like the lessons more?**

**There're just more interesting and everything**

**It's really strange because like the people I used to like sit next to and see loads of the time I only like bump into in the corridors. It's really strange.**

**So you don't see a lot of the people that you spent time with before**

*Only at breaks*

**Is that OK or not OK**

*Its OK cos like you make new friends*

**You made new friends**

*picture*

**I like it because I've got new friends now and there's a lot more people here and I just see S. sometimes and all me other friends but I've made new friends which is better as I've got more.**

**So you've made new friends but you've still got contact with the friends you had**

**I've had to get up much earlier. I used to get up at like 7 and stuff but now it's like quarter to or half past 6**

**Right in order to get here on time**

**How does that make you feel- getting up earlier?**

**Tired**

**What about you Chloe**

**I think the timetable is a bit strange. It's really different having like English 6 times every 2 weeks when we used to have it every day**

**So you've got this when you've got lots of English on one of your new fortnightly timetable**

**Right OK**

**How do you feel about that? Lots of English**

Well I like \English so it doesn't really bother me but well it's just a bit strange. I think

I find it really tiring like getting up at half past 6 in the morning then I'm falling asleep at quarter past, half past 8 at night and it's made me much more organised cos like disciplined like if you forget 2 times your PE kit you get lunch time detentions and so it's made me much more organised

And have you forgotten your PE kit

No

You just know that you shouldn't

Now at this school we have like like 5 times every 2 weeks and 3 times like one week and twice another

Yes

So it's like really active in PE

So you're getting more of that

Yes last year we only had once or twice a week

So you like that OK

When we were at our old school we used to really like doing PE now I really hate it

Why is this?

I don't know I just don't like it any more

Right so something shifted and you don't like it

When it's Wednesday then they normally have dinners but sometimes cos there's so many people in the school cos I'm not fast at like walking I can't get I'm always at the back of the line and I hate the queues cos there's so many in the school

So you go for dinner. Does everybody go for dinner?

You don't have to have school ones. You can swap

But there's lots of people and you have to wait a long time so what happens then

You just got to wait and then get your dinner and try and find a seat to sit down on or you have to sit on the benches sometimes

So there's not enough seating sometimes

I liked PE in my old school but I don't like it now. We used to warm ups and then get straight into a game, but now we have to do loads and loads of warm ups NS That takes up half the lesson and then we just do a little bit of PE like a game but it's not a big game.

So you don't get enough of the game bit

We don't have assembly every day

That's a good thing?

That's a good thing

Apart from we get to have to start lessons earlier, but we don't have to have assembly

Right OK

Also in assembly we don't have to sing

Which is very good

In PE we might do new sports like with hockey and

That's good

I don't know about anybody else but I always used to dread Thursdays cos it was science or was it Tuesday. I always used to dread it and now like we've got it 4 times in week a and 2 times in week b and like I dread it I can't be bothered to look at my timetable and I dread every day in case it's science.

You're getting a lot more of something you don't like



At first break you were allowed to eat your snack outside and you were allowed to eat whatever you want really but at our old school you just had to eat it inside and it was milk and you weren't allowed like crisps or chocolate biscuits or anything you had to have like fruit or cheese strips anything like that

So you've got more choice now

Talking about Sophie's question about Assembly I want to go on the balcony I want the top balcony. You get your leg cramped when I'm sat down on the floor and I get pins and needles and I get embarrassed cos I'm limping. I get pins and needles in one foot and when I'm hopping out of assembly or something so I want actually to sit on chairs on the balcony

Right OK

Last year we all really hated .... It can be boring not really interesting. This year we've started to do more interesting stuff

So we quite enjoy certain subjects

So some of the lessons are more interesting so you get more of lessons and some are more interesting but some are still worrying

I've got used to bad weather because if it's pe you just do it anyway even if it's snowing, raining or soaking

didn't that used to happen at b and w

if it was raining a tiny bit we'd just do maths or something

right so you just do games come hell or high water, floods

you get used to it

is that ok

that's fine yeah

it's better than

In PE the only thing that I don't like is that cos we only get 4 minutes to get changed and when we've got rugby and I'm sort of caked in mud and we have to have showers

and if you're late back from there, I get a detention. I've been late once and I've

forgotten my kit once and I'm just about on the borderline to get a detention soon

It's really hard to keep up with all like cos one of our teachers said I got mixed up

because we've got 2 teachers for PE I get mixed up with which kit we need because

we've got a black and a white kit white kit for indoors and black one for outdoors and

it's just confusing with the 2 teachers and stuff

Right so you're a bit worried that you might get into trouble

Yeah#

Right

So you need to watch for

I think it's a bit funny cos I used to actually hate science and now I really like it

Right

So what's made the difference? So why is science more interesting now

Cos doing acids and stuff

So it's the topic it's not the teacher particularly

It's both, it's both

Paying for dinners daily and like they're more expensive and like now the school isn't giving out loads cos people don't pay them back so if you forget it you've got to ask a

friend and your friend takes money just for themselves and like its really

Sp sometimes you don't bring money with you then what do you do?

You have to ask your friends or go without a lunch

Starve

I don't like the bus leaving so early cos if we've got PE last thing we're not allowed out until 5 minutes before and then cos were hot we get a drink and cos there's a massive queue for that then the bus leaves really early so you're kinda worried that it's going to leave without you

The lessons are more active now like instead of sitting down in science you do more stuff but you still have to write stuff but you making stuff and seeing things and it's more better and it's more fun.

Right so it's more interactive than it used to be

I think cos I really dreaded homework but it sometimes the teachers forget and bothered about and if I do get homework I do it on the night so I can play with my friends. I find it easy I don't find it hard at al.

My bus leaves, My bus is the 3<sup>rd</sup> one coming so I'm alright when it's PE

But it takes ages and when it was the first day it was late and we got home about 4.30 and it was pouring down and it was our first day here.

So you don't think you're getting a lot of homework

I do I get lots each day but it's easy

Right so you can manage it

I'm not complaining

At our old school our teachers just went on and on and we used to get loads and loads of homework and it was really really hard and she just went on and on and we didn't do anything fun. We just had to sit down and write what was on the board.

Right is science better now

Yeah as you do more stuff like with Bunsen burners and acids and stuff but at our old school you just had to write and stuff

So active things not so much writing

You've still got a science Problem

In PE it's good because like we've got boys PE and girls PE so like the girls can do netball and hockey and the boys don't have to just sit there and groan and watch and also having PE like Sophie said you're worrying so sometimes I have to leave my gym shorts on and leave my socks on and stuff or not sometimes put socks back on again so going home my feet are rubbing then I have to stop half way and put socks on

So time for things you need to do

With the bus it's get to be we get here about 5 past eight but some buses don't get here until 25 past which I think it would be a better idea because it would take time off we could have 10/15 minutes more at home and at home time at the end of school, our bus doesn't come until 20/25 past each night so your starting earlier at this school from our old school and I thought like it will be alright cos you're leaving earlier but I'm not leaving school until after I used to leave school.

I think science is more exciting now because we used to have a block afternoon of science which got boring and like you just get fed up of it whereas now you have quick lessons and more of them

So it's broken up a bit more

I though you would have got detentions if you just did one thing wrong but it's not like that you can do ¾ things wrong

Right so some things aren't as bad as you thought they were going to be

I thought for science. We've got 2 teachers. Well I don't know if anyone else has.

We've got Mr M and Mrs H. Mrs H if we did something wrong in the first couple of weeks she'd come down on you like a ton of bricks and I mean like a ton of bricks and like our 2<sup>nd</sup> teacher he's like a go with the flow man he's really really cool and

like Mrs H if you do quicker work than the normal pace if you do more than is normal work she'll send you out of the room out of the science lab but you can run about with Mr M he doesn't care

So you've got teachers who are very very different that is quite hard to manage. Even though it's a big change I like being the youngest class because we get treated just like the year 8s whereas when we were at B and W we were treated not exactly the same but we were treated like we were younger than we were

Right so now you're treated in a way you prefer. How do they do that?

They kinda they don't You had to ask if you wanted to go everywhere you had to ask the teacher whereas here you can like you don't have to ask for everything like you needed to ask if you wanted to get something like across the room most of the time So you can do things more independently

I want more girls' sports cos I used to play for my school rugby team and I like rugby. There was girls' football practice on Fridays and I liked that but now we only play netball and hockey. But Hockey's like when you're bending down and you get a bad back. It really kills and I'm wobbling down the road keeping my back straight.

Right OK

Like at our old school we could just like take our jumpers off but we have to ask now to take our blazer off

So some things you can do more independently and other things you can't

Can I just take these last 3 and then move on

(about the buses) But when we go setting off when we come down past lessons 2 of these like go straight to the upper site are there so when they go out they like hold us up because later on the traffic's getting busier at the time it will probably hold us up a bit. We'd come in like late.

Like you might need to come earlier because there are a whole series of buses going Always like to get a bit less playtime here because you have to queue up to get like on second sitting before when the first sitting here you could go in you've basically lost the choice of rows of biscuits or sandwiches but now you go past like the first quarter in the second bit then there's like one flap jack and 2 sandwiches as well as hot meals. It's obviously not as good as it could be.

What Sarah was saying about rugby? I used to play for the rugby team as well but they have proper rugby here where you jump on top of people and stuff but we used to do tag rugby, which I thought was better for girls because girls don't really like jumping on top of people

I've got 2 questions really. I like being called student and second thing this happened this morning there was a slight accident near our bus stop and it like caused 15 minutes picking up this car and we were stuck and in a way that was the first time that ever happened to me and like I was a bit worried at first because at first I wanted to go to school cos I could see my mates but in a way I didn't and it was quite weird but was good it was the way some of the year 8s were going a bit bonkers and going nutty and shouting and like they were singing. It was alright but

And do you get called students here

Yeah year 7

Can I move on from here to thinking about the sessions Ann and I did with you and I'll go round and ask what you remember, it's OK if you don't remember anything Try and make that cube thing the square with the pieces of paper without saying anything

Them pieces of paper where we drew a web- what are they called- spider maps

Right Ok was that good or?

Sometimes when I was on about whom I like and who I didn't like and I could only fit so many people on it and my friends would tell me off like that

I liked it

I liked doing that HP thing where you had to be him

So thinking in pictures in your Head

I remember the VAK, the jokes and the

What did you think of the jokes?

Some of them were really bad, some of them were OK and some weren't

And what about the VAK bits, was that something that seemed to make any sense to you

Kind of did, but we've done loads of that now in tutor time. We've done about 4 tests to find out what we were again when we already knew what we were and each time I was something different

So it didn't seem to hold true

I remember that thing where we had to write down on a piece of paper what we wanted for the future or something and we stuck that on the board

Riding a bicycle like things from the

Do you remember why we did that riding a bicycle?

No

Trying to ask people how they'd learnt

OOOOOh

It's when we got into groups and we had to do the mind maps we thought of things what we would like

For moving how you would like to move to IGS

We got into groups of VA and K and did we do a poster of with all the things of HP on

In different ways

I remember drawing in the air

Oh right

That was quite cool I liked that

When we did the HP thing about the train it calmed us down and that helped when you got a bit stressed about school

So you've used that relaxation and visualization

Once or twice yes

When we did the making the shapes with the triangles from the envelopes

So that what interested you?

Have you used any of these things from the sessions?

I've used my mind map I've still got that and I used it to see what I'd said and to see what I wanted and wanted from here

For here OK

You know when we were doing that HP thing, yeah. It's called visualization.

I do it in lessons but people tell me off cos I keep falling asleep on the table

Do you explain what you're doing?

When you told us how to calm down I have used that once or twice when my brother's really annoying me before because if I hadn't used it I would have just yelled at him or hit him or something, but instead I've tried not to, but it's not worked sometimes and I've just hit him.

I remember that mind map thingy I did one for this school and I did one for what I was going to do in the day because I was going to be bored I was bored

I've used the calming down things for SATs

Did you

yeah :

And how was that

Good cos I was like I don't know what the question is and I sort of went

So quite a few people have used the calming down stuff and the visualization

Oh yeah I had to show my mum how to use a mind map cos she forget how to use

them and I remembered cos we use them all the time now

I use the mind map for my stories, I use it in my SATs for setting out settings in characters and stuff and I used it quite often now for like in sort of book review I put the points which I was going to do and I did the mind map

When we're told to take notes I always use a mind map cos I find it the easiest way to and the quickest.

I use my mind map for homework

How do you use it for homework? I see this thing at Nell Bank and I did all the pictures

Right

BREAK

What would you think what would you say about doing these sessions again would it be a good idea would you change things, what would you say to this year 6

I'd like to do it again cos it was fun it helped me a lot

I missed the question

I'd love to have it again because its quite enjoyable you don't have it all the time and it's different it makes it more exciting cos you wont have it again will we?

Well I suppose since you a doing lots of things about different sorts of learning you could maybe do it again

It was something to look forward to so if you were having a bad day and I could look forward to it kinda because it is like fun

Were there things you would want to change? In the way that we did it are there things you would want to add

When we were doing it some things I didn't really understand what we were doing

Can you remember what were the things you didn't really understand?

When we were doing writing in the air

That was to do with kinaesthetic wasn't it?

Can we do one now

Can we do the train thing?

What other things were there that you didn't understand

Not sure

Anything else you would expand or know more about

I liked doing those things with the triangles and making them into a squares with talking And I think we should do not lots more but a couple more of those

What was good about that?

It kinda made you it put you in the shoes of people that can't talk so you kinda know what it felt like for them

Right

You know the things where we had to write on a sticky label and stick it on the board and I wrote on one of them that I want to make friends with Chloe cos we kept falling pout all the time. And we kinda like like we made friends  
That was about the move from B and W to here  
Have you read the postcard things?  
The postcards we did at the end of each lesson  
Yes they're all typed up what everybody  
Oh no  
It's just for Ann and I  
Oh good  
Have you still got those?  
It's to help psychologists to find out more about how they can help children in schools  
I just wrote  
I wouldn't worry about what you wrote

Thinking about the move from Band W to IGS are there some suggestions that you would like to make that would make the move better for you might be able to help be better for the next lot of pupils

It was a bit confusing for me cos I didn't know what tutor group I was in. I wasn't on the register but on my drawer (lots of discussion about a boy ..)

So you had a particular confusion it would be better if that were clear

They could give our timetables so we would know what lessons

So when would you have liked the timetables

in the summer holidays that's when we were discussing it this morning

So actually before you got to school you would have liked it

so we knew what lessons you're getting and how many of each week

This school or old school either

I thought the school maybe should have improved not just the way they grouped us but I wasn't put with any boys from my class but then I thought maybe alright cos I'll make new friends which I have done

Then I was also put into G class, which meant I learnt German when I wanted to learn Spanish

Did you have a choice for that?

No not at all

You were just learning German and that was it

Maybe if you were doing the sessions maybe make smaller groups of us so you could focus on points if you were going to specialise in something like kinaesthetic

Oh right

Mat was son about the timetable and he said like in the summer I think we should have been given this first you know when we went for the day to look round. It would have been better to go then something about preparing for lessons

Right so everything should be ready for you then

I think I would have been easier cos in.... it was the end of year 5 or the beginning of year 6 but look round the upper site cos then we learnt our way round the upper site before we learnt out way round the other site

Right so

I think it would have been better I was on my own with 2 boys and a couple of other girls was and I think it would have been better if you'd been put with some other girls from your old school and like if you didn't make friends you would have someone anyway

Well there isn't anyone who can stop this but all the people in year 7 last year they pretended it was really bad going to the upper site. They used to say they were going to do stuff to us

Right

That they made it feel worse it wasn't as bad as they had said it was actually better

There were lots of myths around that were kind of scary but they didn't actually happen

I think that the move was fine

I was looking forward to it

And it worked out as you expected

worries?

I thought the timetable that we got was bit rubbish

Because time you wanted to know what was next you had to look down the list

It was confusing

## **Appendix 27**

### **Example of discussion notes with a class teacher**



Questions for year 6 teachers

At the end of year 6

- What do you think pupils know about 'how they learn'?

pupils not aware before

play - pupils seem to be pleased to find new way of working

difficult to do before  
in many other ways

- What do you think school has done to encourage this?

more Theatre in school - in 1st year

MAD literary activities - DANCE PERFORM  
ART music - Duet/ensemble  
using literature as basis - classroom

- What do you think you have done?

difficult to know what they took  
Julie has tried to do this  
but still with

of Friday open  
newspaper  
drama  
illustrate

- What, if anything, did our sessions add?

VAK, Visualization, relaxation, mind mapping.....

returned to Julie - parents pushed to see change  
not an intervention, opportunities there.

do you think knowing about your learning helps

- -with SATs-

used to meet in 1st year  
returned to school - what met class etc.  
are required

- with transition?

was, getting used to  
not required teaching

## **Appendix 28**

### **Example of notes from personal reflection**

Thoughts on 1st session

main of prep/understanding - but a lack of engagement

Relationships of 3 groups differed - time of day, gender of CI

Transfer to Middle School Pttos - 15v Primary teacher

Recency effect in feedback

Reflective thinking is difficult for 4/6 pupils

each class had displays of skimming learning or not generalised - subject specific or mixed?

SWH a red herring?

3R: more minutes - more handling - more activities  
sucking messy group

4R - more engaged - open about emotions

school organisation inputs on class to get better?

2d the class - & adjusted & more focused.

B.

session

actually - what I have found out about myself as a teacher

- should  
acknowledge

put it in a journal . . . .

## **Appendix 29**

### **Description of initial codes**

<b>Technique</b>	<b>Tools which can be used to support learning, for example ways to calm down, record information</b>
<b>Feature</b>	<b>Aspects that are involved with learning, for example memory, motivation, interest</b>
<b>Support for learning</b>	<b>Comment on anything that helps learning</b>
<b>Information</b>	<b>Referring to content</b>
<b>Understanding of own learning</b>	<b>Reflection on learning processes</b>
<b>Changing understanding of learning</b>	<b>Reflection that new information has changed what had been previously understood about learning</b>

## **Appendix 30**

### **Example of initial coding for section of transcript**

**Example of initial coding**

<p>Well when we first came like a big difference like cos we were travelling differently we were going on buses and not being the oldest in the school was very very weird Was it? Yeah And do you all come on the bus you don't use the train Most people Most people go on the bus So travelling is an extra thing and being the youngest The school being so big. It's a big thing Lots and lots of other pupils I like moving round to different classes and now I've got used to the school and I know where everything is and everything So moving to different classes is OK and now you've got used to it so you're not getting And different subjects Right I like the lessons more here than at primary school Why do you like the lessons more? There're just more interesting and everything It's really strange because like the people I used to like sit next to and see loads of the time I only like bump into in the corridors. It's really strange. So you don't see a lot of the people that you spent time with before Only at breaks Is that OK or not OK Its OK cos like you make new friends You made new friends I like it because I've got new friends now and there's a lot more people here and I just see S. sometimes and all me other friends but I've made new friends which is better as I've got more.</p>	<p><b>Transition</b></p> <p><b>Travelling</b></p> <p><b>Responsibility</b> <b>Transition</b></p> <p><b>Travelling</b></p> <p><b>Travelling</b> <b>Responsibility</b> <b>Environment</b> <b>Environment</b> <b>Lessons</b> <b>Transition</b> <b>Transition</b></p> <p><b>Lessons</b></p> <p><b>Lessons</b></p> <p><b>Lessons</b></p> <p><b>Worry</b> <b>Friends</b></p> <p><b>Loss</b></p> <p><b>Friends</b></p> <p><b>Friends</b></p>
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## **Appendix 21**

### **Planning for the rest of year 6**

**Individual mind map (original of example used in text)**

**Individual mind map (further example)**